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LOUIS XV IN 1760  
*from a portrait by Van Loo*

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## P R E F A C E

FOR a whole century, French people have entertained the mistaken idea that their history began in 1789. Thus they have looked upon the seventy-five preceding years merely as a period of slow disorganization, during which the foundations of the Monarchy gradually crumbled until it foundered in the darkness of irretrievable disaster. In their eagerness to account for the Revolution, to trace its remoter causes, to chronicle the words and ideas of its prophets and its artisans, the historians of Louis the Fifteenth and his age came at length to concentrate their sole attention upon the evils and grievances which presaged, or paved the way, for the ultimate catastrophe. By glossing over some features and emphasizing others, they produced a picture of the Seventeenth Century which was gravely distorted, a picture in which, though nothing is actually left out, everything is misplaced and out of focus. More at their ease among abstractions than among realities, they made it their special aim to trace the evolution of ideas which fructified in *Télémaque* and the *Contrat Social*, and ingenuously threaded, on one and the same string, people and things, war and politics in such manner that the progress of liberal criticism seems to proceed strictly hand in hand with the decline of morality, the decadence of the country and the degeneration of the Monarchy. We lead off with Fénelon, La Fare, Villars and Fleury, and finish up quite smoothly and naturally, with Rousseau, Sade, Soubise and Necker.

It requires no great measure of reflection, no very intensive scrutiny, to perceive how arbitrary and deceptive such a geometrical view of the matter must necessarily be. Nevertheless, its very simplicity has lent it a charm, and, with a view to substantiating and preserving it, all inquiry into the selection of data, the value of the evidence and the credibility of the stories themselves has been consistently discouraged.

It was thought that the unpopularity of the Monarchy would be sufficiently established by putting it on record that, whereas applications for six thousand Masses were received at Notre-Dame while the King lay sick at Metz, only four hundred were said after Damiens' attempt to assassinate him. This is too readily to ignore the fact that at Metz the King was hovering for ten whole days between life and death, whereas, after the attempted assassination, the people learnt that he had been wounded and that he was out of danger, almost in the same breath.

Was ever a story more thoroughly worked to death than that which relates how Louis the Fifteenth, when a boy, savagely slew the pet doe that had been wont to come and eat from his hand.

Never a portrait of the child-King but this incident is recounted as evidence of his nascent perversity. Not a single writer casts the slightest doubt upon its authenticity. The only point on which they differ is how to explain the enormity. Michelet inclines to think that it was an outburst of rage against a Jesuit confessor; Dom Leclercq, the author of a recent work in three volumes on the Regency, favours the notion that it was symptomatic of a precocious puberty. The tales all emanate from one and the same source, the diary of a contemporary, one Barbier, an advocate, who, at the end of April, 1722, sets down the fact as having taken place three weeks before. But Barbier was not an eye-witness, and only speaks from hearsay. He was a thoroughly honest man who recorded impartially the various tales that were bandied about the town, and was quite incapable of tampering with them, whether by way of addition or subtraction. Still, though he did not invent his tales, tales they were, notwithstanding. Barbier did not frequent the Court. His first-hand knowledge of the King was limited to what he saw of him at a distance when His Majesty was taking the air. None of his friends or kinsfolk had any direct intercourse with the royal entourage. What, then, is his evidence worth? A good deal where the feeling and ideas of the man in the street, or the happenings in the Law Courts are in question; none at all when they concern a social sphere with which he has no acquaintance, and of which only faint and far-off echoes ever reach his ears.

It so happens, however, that for this same year, 1722, we are fortunate enough to possess the memoranda of a well-informed chronicler, Louis the Fifteenth's own page, the Marquis de Calvière, the little King's daily and familiar companion. Calvière's diary was given to the public by the Goncourts, and is to be found in the first volume of *les Portraits Intimes*. Therein the sayings and doings of Louis the Fifteenth are faithfully set down, day by day, almost hour by hour. But you may search the record through and through for the tale of the slain deer. You will not find it. But under date of April the 30th, we read as follows: 'As the King was driving back from la Muette to the Château, I stood on the step. A very pretty little deer followed us. It nibbles paper and shows no fear when the King fires off his gun close to its ear.' There, then, we have the origin of the myth. Doubtless Louis the Fifteenth often amused himself by performing this harmless exploit with his gun. Told by some serving-man, and passing from mouth to mouth, the story became gradually distorted. The King's bad upbringing was a subject of daily conversation among those who had a bone to pick with the Regent. The story about the deer came in very opportunely. Shots fired, a whole fusillade, murder most foul – and there we are! Only those who have never asked two different people to

describe the same event, will be surprised at such a metamorphosis. But what remains of those romantic deductions regarding the Jesuit confessor, and Louis the Fifteenth's precocious puberty and his congenital cruelty?

All the history-books concur in alleging that Louis the Fifteenth was never taught anything, and that Fleury, his tutor, spent the hours which should have been devoted to study, in playing cards with his pupil. Yet, in the Bibliothèque Nationale, there are to be seen seven or eight volumes of exercises, translations, fables and proverbs written out or copied by the King between 1717 and 1723!

Just as threadbare is the story that, when Madame de Pompadour died, Louis the Fifteenth evinced the most revolting callousness. When the body of his mistress was being taken away from Versailles, he stationed himself at a window, took out his watch and fell to calculating how long it would be before the procession reached Paris. The story is related by M. Carré in volume eight of Lavis's history. But the two attendants who were with the King at the time have each given independent accounts of the grief which he then displayed. They speak of nothing else but of his sighs, his tears and his sorrow. In 1790, one of them wrote to La Harpe protesting against the charge of inhumanity which had been calumniously levelled against his master on that occasion.

Louis the Fifteenth has been judged wholly and solely on the testimony of his enemies. Fallen ministers, disaffected servants, pensioners of the King of Prussia, paid pamphleteers, enemies of France – these are the people on whose witness the historians have relied for their 'facts'. As for the writers of romance, they have displayed even less compunction, and, although the collection of reminiscences published by Soulavie during the Revolution is universally recognized as nothing more than a tissue of lies manufactured wholesale to please the Jacobins, it is still to the apocryphal *mémoires* of Madame de Pompadour, Richelieu, Maurepas and d'Aiguillon that they have recourse for the unsavoury details and scandalous episodes which furnish the stock-in-trade of current literature concerning the court of Louis the Fifteenth.

Licentiousness, military reverses, intrigues, revolutionary propaganda – are we to take it that this fairly summarizes the age of Louis the Fifteenth? For our part we should not refuse to concur in this unfavourable verdict if we could feel that it was justified by the evidence; but false witnesses furnish no material on which to pronounce judgment and, things being as they are, we feel ourselves at liberty to form our own private opinion.

Though nothing is more remote from our aim than to whitewash a graceless age, or to impress an artificial unity on an epoch of unexampled diversity, we may surely be allowed to examine it on

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its merits and to ascertain whether we have not inherited from it something more than libidinous stories, shoddy ornaments, and anti-social day-dreams.

I have appended no bibliography to this book. The series does not provide for one and it would be a piece of the merest pedantry to add it. My special thanks, however, are due, and are here gratefully recorded, to M. le Comte de Chabannes, who has most generously vouchsafed me access to his family papers, and has allowed me to make use of the Maurepas papers and of Cardinal Fleury's letters, which have come to him by inheritance; to M. le Comte de Choiseul who has kindly placed at my disposal the Memoirs and the letters, official or private, of the Duc de Praslin, his grandfather, relating to the period of his Ambassadorship at Vienna; to Father de Boynes, who has entrusted me with the private diary of Bourgeois de Boyer, for the years 1765 and 1766, as well as with a copy of all the documents relating thereto; to the Marquis de Bertier de Sauvigny, who has permitted me to examine all the surviving papers of Charles Bertier de Sauvigny, First President of Parlement and intendant in Paris; to Madame Camille Mallarmé, who has copied out for me at Parma the letters which Louis the Fifteenth wrote to her daughter and her son-in-law; and finally to the Archivists of the Marne, the Somme, Seine Inférieure, Calvados, Orne, Moselle, Loiret, Indre et Loire, Vienne and Haute Vienne, Gironde, Lot, Puy de Dôme and Isère, who have assisted me in investigating the collections committed to their charge, and whose invaluable advice has enabled me to carry through, with a great economy of time, the researches on which I embarked between the years 1920 and 1927 in the archives of their respective departments.

In conclusion, I must plead guilty to a glaring piece of larceny: I have purloined the title of this book from an old author who, more than one hundred and fifty years ago, wrote a 'Précis' of the age of Louis the Fourteenth. I refer to no less a person than M. de Voltaire. If we are at liberty to supply our needs wherever we may find the means so to do, it will be generally agreed that I could not have had recourse to a richer granary.

## CHAPTER I

### THE KING IS DEAD

THE King's industry, wisdom, dignity and regal bearing were still as wonderful as they had ever been, but, for a year past, his health had been declining. To outward view, there was no change in the activities to which he was accustomed to devote himself. He interested himself in the embellishment of his gardens, and divided his time between councils of State, work, religious observances, the chase, and listening to music. Nevertheless, when the spring arrived, it was clear that he was failing. He complained of fatigue, of sensations of sickness and of pains in the head. Maréchal, his Surgeon-in-Ordinary, spoke warningly to Madame de Maintenon, but she had no ears for anyone but Fagon, and Fagon, being worn out, saw nothing.

On August 9th, the King was indisposed; on the 11th he felt better and went for a drive to Trianon; but the next day he was seized with such violent pains in the leg that he could scarcely move. During the next few days, the pain grew steadily worse and the King was simultaneously deprived of movement, sleep and appetite. There was nothing for it but to bow to the evidence and call in the doctors. They examined the affected limb and noticed some suspicious-looking red patches, but, not being able to agree on a diagnosis, they contented themselves with prescribing asses' milk and rubbing. Unable to sleep, worn out with fatigue, thirst and fever, trying in vain to find a comfortable position in which to lie, sweating unceasingly, getting up and going back to bed again several times an hour, the King nevertheless overcame his sufferings in order to occupy himself with affairs of State, hold his Council and confer with his ministers. He also had himself carried several times into the chapel and the music-room. On the 19th, the leg began to swell and turn black. The King himself talked about amputation. It was decided to give him a bath of aromatic herbs steeped in wine. By this time ten doctors had congregated at Versailles. They consulted together at great length, approved of the herb-bath, and continued with the asses' milk. On the 24th, the rumour gained currency that it was gangrene. Madame de Maintenon came and

took up her station at the King's bedside, warned him of the danger and suggested that he should receive the sacraments.

'It is early, yet,' he said, 'for I am feeling well. Nevertheless it is always good to avail oneself of this succour betimes.'

And so he began to prepare himself. Madame de Maintenon lent her aid, reminding him of divers faults she had seen him commit in order that he might humble himself because of them, and ask pardon of God. At four o'clock, he sent for Père Le Tellier and made his confession. When he had finished, he asked that Madame de Maintenon should come to him.

'Madame,' he said to her, 'I am somewhat more at peace. I have made my confession to the best of my ability. My confessor has told me that I ought to put great trust in God's mercy; you say the same thing, but I shall never console myself for having offended Him.'

The 25th was the Feast of Saint Louis. The King commanded that all things should proceed as usual. He heard Mass and then, from his bed, listened to the *aubade* on the fiddles and the fifes, dined in public, and chatted for a quarter of an hour with all and sundry. Had he not said to people who had pointed out to him how ill he was: 'I have lived among the people of my Court; among them I hope to die. They have followed the whole course of my life; it is meet that they should witness the conclusion of it?'

Towards night the weakness increased, and his mind began to wander. As soon as his head grew clear again, he asked that *Viaticum* should be given him, and the Cardinal went to fetch it from the chapel and, at the same moment, the curé of Versailles arrived with the Holy Oils. The ceremony of Extreme Unction was performed in public. A little afterwards he fell into a doze, but this was of brief duration, and at eleven o'clock he awoke again. At his side, sat Madame de Maintenon, weeping.

'How now, Madame!' said he, 'You are grieving to see that I am soon to die? Have I not lived long enough? Did you think I was immortal? No, no, I know very well that I must needs say good-bye to it all. I have been thinking about it for a long time, and made ready to depart, for well I know that there is a Ruler infinitely above all earthly kings, and that it behoves us to submit to His sovereign will.'

Next day he busied himself with going through his deed-boxes, burning the papers that were in them. He also took some memoranda from his pocket. Those, too, he consigned to the flames. He

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added a codicil to his will, ordered that immediately after his death, the new King, his successor, should be taken to Vincennes and kept there till the funeral ceremonies were over, settling the various details regarding the escort, the journey and the place of sojourn. Never did he show himself more truly a king than in those last hours. No repining; never a shade of gloom; never a word suggestive of a dying man weakly clinging to the ebbing remnants of his life; never a phrase to remind one of earthly pride exalting itself and essaying, yet once again, to lord it over those whom it was about to quit; nothing but the noblest, the serenest and most royal majesty.

A dozen accounts have preserved for us the King's last words. On August 26th, the Dauphin was brought to him. Madame de Ventadour set him in an armchair. For a while, the old man looked intently at his frail successor, and then, with tears in his eyes, he said: 'Dear child, you are going to be the greatest King in the world; never forget the duty you owe to God. Do not follow my example in the matter of wars; endeavour, at all times, to remain at peace with your neighbours, to alleviate, so far as in you lies, the burdens of your people, a thing which, alas, I was not able to do, by reason of necessities of State. Always follow good advice, and never forget what you owe to Madame de Ventadour.' Then, turning to the governess, he said, 'To you, Madame, I have to render thanks for your care in bringing up this child, and for the tender affection you bestow upon him. I pray you ever to continue so to do, and I exhort him to show you every possible mark of the gratitude he owes you. . . . Madame, hold the dear child close to me, so that I may kiss him for the last time, since it pleases God to ordain that the consolation of bringing him up to a riper age shall not be mine.' Then, raising his eyes to heaven and clasping his hands in prayer, he said, 'Lord, I offer Thee this child. Give him grace to serve Thee and honour Thee as a truly Christian king, and grant that he may cause Thee to be adored and honoured of all the people of this realm.' The Dauphin began to sob. He had to be taken from the room.

To the Duc du Maine and the Comte de Toulouse, the King spoke a long time in private. He also conversed, in a low voice or with the doors closed, with the Duc d'Orléans, but just as he was letting him depart, he said very loudly, for all to hear, 'My nephew, I appoint you Regent of the Kingdom. You are about to see one King in the tomb, and another in the cradle. Never forget the memory of the one, nor the welfare of the other.' He protested that



in regard to the recent religious affairs, he had only followed the advice of Cardinals de Rohan and Bissy, and that, if he had done amiss, it lay with them to answer for him. He bade an affectionate farewell to the friends of his youth, his courtiers, his servants and his officers.

'Gentlemen,' he said, 'I am well content with your services. You have served me faithfully and with the desire to do my pleasure. I am grieved that I have not rewarded you more amply than I have done. I leave you with regret. Serve the Dauphin with the same affection with which you have served me. He is but a child of five, and may suffer many trials, for I remember that I myself had many sorrows to endure in my childhood days. I am going, but the State will remain. Never waver in your attachment to it, and may your example be a guide for all my other subjects. Let unity and concord reign among you all, for therein lies the guarantee of the cohesion and strength of the State; and carry out the commands that my nephew will lay upon you. He it is who will govern the Kingdom. I trust that he will govern it well. I trust also that you will do your duty, and that you will sometimes remember me.'

At length, when he felt that his end was near, he begged Madame de Maintenon to retire. 'Stay no longer, Madame,' he said. 'It is a sight too sad to see, but I hope it will soon be ended.' Soon afterwards, he again became unconscious. His leg was decomposed like that of a corpse, and his lips were so dry that they had to be moistened with water. In the night, when the clergy began to recite the prayers for the dying, their voices recalled him to himself. He said the *Ave Maria* and the *Credo*. Several times he was heard to murmur, 'O God, come to my assistance, O God, make haste to help me.' At five o'clock in the morning, his breathing took on a low rattling sound. At a quarter past eight, he breathed his last.

The surgeons at once proceeded to lay out the body, and the serving men set the death-chamber in order. When all was ready the Duc de Bouillon, the Grand Chamberlain, passed out on to the balcony that overlooked the Marble Court and shouted:

'King Louis the Fourteenth is dead!'

And then, a moment later:

'Long live King Louis the Fifteenth!'

It was September 1st, 1715.

The great preoccupation of the Monarchy had always been to safeguard the succession to the throne. Before he died, Louis the

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Fourteenth had witnessed the successive disappearance of his son, the Grand Dauphin; of his grandsons, the Duc de Bourgogne and the Duc de Berry; while their brother, the Duc d'Anjou, had forfeited his right to the throne by becoming King of Spain. His great-grandson, Louis the Fifteenth, was a pretty, but delicate child of five. A long time must elapse before he could have an heir, and they were in perpetual dread lest something should happen to him in the meantime.

The first Prince of the Blood was the Duc d'Orléans, Louis the Fourteenth's nephew. He was nearing the forties and his reputation was none of the sweetest. Witty, charming and clever, 'he had been enriched with every gift of heart and mind, as well as with a courage, endurance and military ability which had enabled him to shine in war. But his moral depravity was unaccountable and gave rise to grave scandal. In 1709, when Philip the Fifth seemed on the point of relinquishing the Spanish throne, he entered into negotiations with England, with a view to taking his place. Recalled to Paris and looked on unfavourably at Versailles, he went out of his way wilfully to scandalise the Court and the Town. He drank to excess, had several bastards, frequented the lowest company, cursed and swore from sunset to sunrise, indulged in disgusting talk and took good care that the reports of his excesses were bruited about all over the town.'

In point of fact there was a large infusion of the braggart and coxcomb in his composition. He was a small drinker, and a single glass of wine was enough to go to his head. After his Spanish adventure, he took up chemistry as a hobby, fitted up a laboratory in the Palais-Royal and went in for raising the Evil One. He was accused of incest, sorcery and poisoning, and, as he was known to be ambitious, it was currently reported, that he had murdered his cousin. Louis the Fourteenth had every possible reason for frowning on a prince who was so abundantly decried. There were some very wide gaps in the French Royal House. If death were to strike at it again with a like violence, an heir would have to be sought in some distant collateral branch. Hence the idea which occurred to Louis the Fourteenth, of reinforcing the direct line, an idea which he put into execution in 1714. The two sons whom he had had by Madame de Montespan, the Duc du Maine and the Comte de Toulouse, were declared legitimate, and competent to succeed to the throne. The Edict was brought before the Parlement in July and registered without opposition.

On August the 2nd, the new Princes of the Blood took their seats in the Upper Chamber. On the same day, the old King made his will. Inasmuch as he could not live long enough to see his heir arrive at the years of discretion, and desiring both to respect his nephew's rights and to protect the child from evil influences, he separated the future Regency from the tutelage of the young King. The Duc du Maine, a God-fearing, sober-living man, was to be responsible for the little King's education, and was to have command of the household troops, by way of material guarantee. The Regency and its duties were to devolve upon a Council which was to be presided over by the Duc d'Orléans, but to which the old servants of the State would have the entrée, and in which everything would be decided by a majority of votes.

This complicated arrangement was at the root of the difficulties and scandals which were soon to come about. The lack of a king old enough to govern opened the door to every species of rivalry and competition. There were candidates for the Regency, and, as no one thought that Louis the Fifteenth would live, there were candidates for the throne as well. The Duc d'Orléans was impatient of an authority limited by a council, in the choice of whose members he had no voice. Nor did he acquiesce in the legitimization of the bastard Princes, and there was destined to be no peace until these possible competitors were put back in their places. On the other hand, it was public knowledge that the Duc d'Anjou, who had become Philip the Fifth of Spain, looked on the renunciation which he had signed at Utrecht, as having been wrung from him under duress and, consequently, null and void. If the throne fell vacant, it was certain that he would lay claim to it with all the forces of Spain at his back. That naturally led the Duc d'Orléans to look for support from another sovereign, George the First of England, who, substituted by Parliament for the Catholic House of Stuart, had all the appearance of a usurper. But this *rapprochement* entailed the complete reversal of French diplomacy and foreign policy. The King is dead! And behold, party rule, personal rivalries and foreign intervention are the order of the day!

The Duc d'Orléans proceeded with all speed to get the governing machine into working order. Louis the Fourteenth had nourished few or no illusions as to the fate likely to befall his last wishes. Saint-Simon, Dangeau and Berwick all record that he said to the Queen Mother of England, apropos of his will, 'I know how vain and useless it is. We do all that we want to do while we are alive; but

after our death, we count for less than the humblest of our subjects. You have only to see what happened to my father's will as soon as he was dead, and to the wills of I know not how many other kings besides.' Anyhow, according to the legal tradition of the old régime, the Crown was not strictly speaking hereditary, it was successive, that is to say that the King only held it in trust, he was merely the tenant-in-tail and was obliged to hand it over to his successor intact and free from mortgages and encumbrances. On these grounds, and despite the fact that Louis the Fifteenth was a minor, it was possible to hold that the will went counter to the fundamental laws admitted by every court of justice, and thus Philippe d'Orléans had no difficulty in having it set aside.

On the second of September, amid a great display of military pomp, he proceeded to the Paris Parlement, and explained that the prior appointment of the members of the Regency Council without reference to him was an infringement of his rights, and an outrage upon his feelings of affection for the King. He demanded the control of the Military Household and promised the judges to govern only with the aid of 'their advice and wise remonstrances'. This was tantamount to reinstating the magistrates in a rôle of which they had been deprived for half a century. Flattered and surprised, they acclaimed the Duc and granted him everything he desired. Will and codicils were abrogated with eager haste. Not only did the Regent claim the right to choose the members of the Council, but he resumed command of all the troops and the prerogative of making appointments to every office. On the face of it, he was monarch of all he surveyed; but it was only on the face of it. His endeavours to strengthen his position on one side, contributed to undermine it on the other. In thus giving leave to the Parlements to criticize and intervene, whenever they thought fit, in the conduct of public affairs, he was compromising for a whole century the exercise of the royal prerogative. By successive encroachments and rebellions, another power rose up to confront the Crown. That power was the Law. Throughout the reign of Louis the Fifteenth the air was filled with the clamour of their incessant bickerings. These consequences only came to light in the course of time, but the difficulties in connection with foreign policy were at once apparent. With England, aggrandized by the treaty of Utrecht, it was no doubt in France's interest to keep the peace, but she also had her independence to safeguard and her future to look to. The treaty gave her the means. The Hapsburgs, permanently removed from Madrid and

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confined to their hereditary dominions, still clung to the empty and pompous title of Emperor. But they had ceased to be a menace. Shorn of their power, sadder and wiser men, they were now in the category of moderating and conservative elements. Renouncing all ambition to remain dominant in Germany, the House of Austria was interested in seeing to it that no other House should become dominant there either. Henceforth, the Hapsburg role was to counter, or help to counter, the formation of a great German monarchy, with Prussia or, it may be, Hanover, as its dominating centre. The Spanish question had been settled to the advantage of France. A Bourbon was reigning at Madrid. The Empire of Charles the Fifth was but a memory. Secure on all her frontiers, France looked forward to being in a position to devote her undivided energies to maritime and colonial expansion. The English statesmen were not blind to these contingencies, and, in order to avert them, they took advantage of the means which circumstances placed at their disposal: they frightened the Regent with the bogey of a war, and then promised to help him to maintain his power and, if anything should happen to Louis the Fifteenth, to secure his succession to the throne. Already, long before the death of Louis the Fourteenth, the English ambassador, Lord Stair, had had several conferences with Philippe d'Orléans, and had offered him, in the name of his Government, 'the most effective assistance'. At first the Regent was inclined to sit on the fence. He even sent Philip the Fifth a special envoy named Louville who was to keep him posted in regard to the real intentions of the ex-Duc d'Anjou. Louville was furnished with a secret code which enabled him to dissemble, under cover of the language of obscenity, the most highly confidential information. If, for example, he wanted to say to his master, 'The Jesuits are playing the devil with their machinations against His Royal Highness,' he wrote, 'My piles are enough to drive me mad.' But all this ingenuity was thrown away. Philip the Fifth would have nothing to do with Louville, and the Regent permitted himself to fall into the English trap.

The vain and fruitless tortuosities of these negotiations make the story of them a complicated and wearisome business. None of the actors in the drama show to advantage; neither the Regent, at once timid and ambitious, torn this way and that between two opposing forces – his ambition on the one side, and the old Court routine on the other; nor Philip the Fifth, an excessively married man, a slave to his wife and her whimsies; nor George the First, loutish, thick-

headed, dull-witted, very much less King of England than Elector of Hanover; not even Stair, a good patriot, but rough, cantankerous, an ambassador that was three parts spy. On the French side, everything was managed by the Abbé Dubois, a little wizened, wispy man, with a monkey face, a devil to talk, a man of the world, fertile in ideas, full of resource, a staunch friend to the Regent, whose tutor he had been, but, withal, rapacious, graceless and without a shred of dignity.

The English Alliance was a masterpiece of backstairs diplomacy. Disguises, pots of wine, threats of blackmail – the whole paraphernalia was there, nothing was lacking. On the groundwork of the main intrigue, were embroidered comic or sanguinary episodes; the Pretender, James the Third, landing in Scotland; underhand negotiations on the part of the Spanish minister, Alberoni, who wanted to unite Peter the Great and Charles the Twelfth against England; an attempt to foment a rising of the Breton nobility; a comic-opera conspiracy concocted by the Duchesse du Maine, who was off her head, assisted by the Spanish Ambassador, Cellamare, who was a feckless fool . . . Finally, the Franco-Anglo-Dutch Triple Alliance was concluded at the Hague on January 4th, 1717, and expanded into a quadruple Alliance by the adhesion of the Emperor on August 2nd, 1718. France had to stand the racket of the combination. At Utrecht, we had undertaken to dismantle the Dunkirk forts, fill up the harbour and destroy the sluices. But forthwith, under pretext of cleaning out the Mardyck canal, we began to construct a new harbour six miles away from the old one. As a primary condition of the alliance, the English demanded that this work should cease, and Dubois had agreed. At the same time, to safeguard the Hanoverian dynasty from Jacobite attacks, he had ordered James the Third to be expelled, as his mere presence in France was regarded by George the First as a formidable menace.

We must here quote Michelet, who is really magnificent on this subject. 'Stair, the English envoy, had said, and Dubois had repeated, that the usurper George had a natural friend in the usurper of the Regency. This was a bold, paradoxical and striking way of expressing an idea which was, in reality, quite just. The puppets of the old Gothic past, the Stuart, the Spaniard – were they indeed the real kings of the two greatest and most civilized nations in the world? What did they bring them, unless it were shame and folly? As compared with their false hereditary claims, George the Protestant, Orléans the Freethinker, represented the real principle of right,

## LOUIS THE FIFTEENTH

the right of nations to shape their own destiny and to progress. This treaty, this contract of mutual assurance which benefited each of them separately, was also a benefit to the whole of Europe. It led to the real, firm and genuine peace for which the world had been yearning ever since the sham peace of Utrecht, which had settled nothing.'

The first outcome of 'the real, firm and genuine peace' was war. And war with whom? With Spain, at whose side we had just been fighting for fifteen years; with her French King, Philip the Fifth, for whom we had made such huge sacrifices of men and money. An army under the command of Berwick crossed the Bidassoa and seized Passage which Alberoni had made the great naval base of the kingdom. In a few days, the whole place was destroyed; ships, dockyards, munitions and stores. A separate body of troops went out and burnt San Antonio, a port close to Bilbao and the headquarters of naval ship-construction. And so this useless expedition, which cost the already depleted French Treasury one hundred millions, effected no useful purpose but to ensure the maritime supremacy of England. Fortunately hostilities were soon over. With the Spanish fleet dispersed by Admiral Byng off Syracuse, Alberoni dismissed, and Philip the Fifth confirming his renunciation of the French crown, peace was signed without let or hindrance in May, 1720. France gave back Fontarabia, Santander and the fortresses she had taken. Spain ratified her adhesion to the treaty of mutual guarantee. Louis the Fifteenth was affianced to the only daughter of Philip the Fifth, and the Infante don Luis married Mademoiselle de Montpensier, the Regent's daughter. Was it necessary to go to war to achieve such ends? Was it necessary, for the sole benefit of English policy, to destroy, for the time being, the normal system of our alliances, as it had come to us from the treaties of 1713 and 1714?

Then again, this *rapprochement* with Philip the Fifth had to be paid for with further concessions. The treaty of Utrecht had proclaimed the perpetual neutrality of Italy, and Louis the Fourteenth thought he would thus counter the ambitions of the Italian princes, just as he had thought to restrain, through the agency of Austria, the hopes of aggrandizement cherished by the German Electors elevated to the royal status. With the twofold object of pleasing Philip the Fifth, who could not console himself for the loss of his Italian dominions, and of pleasing his second wife, Elisabeth Farnese, whose dream it was to free her country from the Austrian yoke by setting up her own sons there, the Regent and Dubois recognized

the Infante don Carlos as heir to the sovereignty of Parma and ultimately of Tuscany, where the last of the Medicis were dying. Fresh upheavals and a fresh war were in prospect. But, as it was necessary not to give the alarm to the English by this recrudescence of Franco-Spanish friendship, Philip the Fifth, to the prejudice of our own contractors, granted them certain important commercial privileges in South America, and, in return, we acquiesced in the encroachments of the Spaniards in Florida and on the frontiers of Louisiana. On every side, the interests of France were being sacrificed.

The Regent and Dubois were both intelligent well-informed men. If they had been able to foresee with any certainty what was going to happen on the morrow they would no doubt have acted otherwise both with regard to the Parlements and to foreign powers. But they only wielded a doubtful authority. In going counter to the wishes of Louis the Fourteenth, they had lost the support which the traditions of the preceding reign and the prestige of the late King would have conferred upon them. Having no convincing moral authority of their own, such as would have ensured them the obedience of all, from the highest to the lowest, they were compelled to look elsewhere for the conditions of lasting security which they lacked. In justice to their common sense, let it be acknowledged that they would often have liked to act otherwise than they did. But with regard to the French people, or, at least, with regard to that portion of them which talks, discusses, reads, frequents the Court and furnishes the personnel of the government institutions, the Regency found itself in the position of a government subject to public opinion, obliged to defer to its friends and compelled, in particular, to redress the grievances which had been silently accumulating during the last twenty years.

In the words of the anonymous gazetteer whose correspondence has been published by M. de Barthélemy, the monarchy of Louis the Fourteenth was changed into a kind of republic. Willy-nilly, this semi-republic found itself in violent reaction against everything which the Great King had had at heart, everything which he had either forbidden, or imposed upon his subjects. He had reduced everyone to obedience including, in the first place, those who are invariably impatient of authority: The princes and the great ones of the earth, who think to find in their lineage, their rank, their office, their services, an excuse for playing the part of independent sovereigns. Emancipated from royal control, these were now the ring-leaders of reaction. If the Regency was indeed a period of revolution, it was so far no more than a revolution of dukes and peers.



## THE SYSTEM

THE plans for an aristocratic revolution were by no means a novelty. They dated from Fénelon and the Duc de Bourgogne, and they took on form and consistency in 1711, after the death of the Grand Dauphin. What the Duc de Bourgogne would have done had he succeeded to the throne, we can only conjecture. The possession of power often suffices to transform a man into something quite different from what he was, and contact with reality not infrequently compels him to renounce ideas which looked very seductive on paper, but which, when it comes to putting them to the practical test, turn out to be unworkable or pernicious. What is certain, however, is that the Duc de Bourgogne had been very ill brought up.

People, as a rule, go into ecstasies over Fénelon's qualities as a tutor. They belaud his style, his wit, his gentleness, his firmness and his virtue. The worthy Lemaître thinks how fine it was that he proved himself no sugar-saint, and that he could draw so enticing a picture of Calypso's fair companions. What his panegyrists fail to see is that, having to form a king, it was his duty, before everything, to inspire him with a love of his calling. So far from doing that, Fénelon used his utmost endeavours to turn him against it. Over and over again, he tells him that royalty is a burden, a bondage. Over and over again, he depicts the fatigues, the anxieties, the perils that fall to the lot of him that wears a crown. Not once does he allude to the grandeur or the beauty of the kingly state. A sovereign, bloodless, nerveless, strengthless, with no will of his own, a leader who dared neither to show himself, nor to act, nor to govern – such was the model that Fénelon set before the successor of Henry of Navarre. But this simulacrum of a king would no doubt have found a wholly satisfactory outlet for his energy in tyrannizing over his subjects' consciences, regulating the limits of *décolletage*, and making bigotry a State duty.

When the Duc de Bourgogne had to appear with the Army, he showed himself timid, irresolute, null; a sorry general and a sorry soldier. For that, Fénelon was responsible, though never for a moment did he realize it. After Oudenarde, he wrote his former pupil a letter full of terrible reproaches, as if he himself had not done his utmost to make him a weakling and a nonentity.

Brunetière has delineated Fénelon in a picture that has become a classic of pen-portraiture. 'There was,' he says, 'something of everything in him: something of the doctor, something of the innovator, not to say the heretic; of the aristocrat and the philosopher, as the eighteenth century was to understand that word; of the man of ambition and the unselfish Christian; of the revolutionary and the inquisitor; of the Utopian dreamer and the statesman; of the dilettante and the apostle, every contrary in one and the same person, every extreme in one and the same mind.'

The portrait was a flattering one, because, excepting courage, Fénelon had none of the qualities of a statesman. Moreover, if he harboured all the contraries, he reconciled none of them. It would be understating the case to say that he was enigmatic and complex. The truth was he was a man of confused and unbalanced intelligence. Read the pathetic effusions he exchanged with Madame Guyon, or the silly little rhymes he composed for her. It pains one to see the childish absurdities in which he comes to take delight. Insinuating, engaging, of noble aspect, an adept at creating a popular legend of himself, Fénelon was devoid of common sense, and that infirmity made him a ready prey to all manner of foolish and fantastic ideas.

His political writings are beneath contempt. One would fain discover in them a trace of genuine sorrow for the sufferings of France in her hour of trial, but there is such a parade of charity, of charity diffused from such lofty heights, it is mingled with such a strong infusion of gall and wormwood, as, in the long run, to make us doubt his sincerity and to tempt one to see in it all only the artfulness of an ambitious soul. The injustice with which he treats Louis the Fourteenth is constant and flagrant. One would really think that seventeenth-century Europe was nothing more nor less than a beribboned sheepfold, peopled with innocent sheep and raided by this ferocious wolf who was the Grand Monarch. He is always in the wrong. He is harsh, overbearing, violent, vainglorious, without religion and without faith. Of English maritime imperialism, not a word. Of Prussia's ambitions, not a word. Of the lowering Hapsburg menace, not a word. Of the United Provinces concluding a separate peace with Spain in violation of their solemn undertaking, not a word. Of the Emperor Leopold taking the initiative in the war of succession by occupying Northern Italy, not a word. Of the animosities, the falsehoods, the denunciations, the lies and provocative conduct of William of Orange and Heinsius, not a word. In these hypocritical complaints, drawn up in the darkest hour of the

reign, we detect the rancour of the discarded counsellor who, seeing his master's affairs drifting on to ruin, cannot resist the temptation of preaching him a fine sermon and prophesying more ills and more humiliations to come. The letter of 1694 is full of hatred and hypocrisy. The letter of 1710 is worse. In it Fénelon preaches discouragement, division and defeat. One would think he was wedded to calamity, that he longed for things to grow ever worse and worse, so that he might deplore them in accents of ever increasing horror and affliction. But for these evils which he depicts with such morbid delight, what remedy does he suggest? A talking-shop of big-wigs.

In 1711, he imagined himself a Minister of State. The Grand Dauphin had just died. The Duc de Bourgogne, the direct heir to the throne, would soon be King. Once more, Fénelon took concerted measures with his bosom friends the Duc de Beauvilliers and the Duc de Chevreuse, both sons-in-law of Colbert, and he and Chevreuse drew up the plans of government which are called the 'Tables de Chaulnes', after the place in which they were elaborated. No doubt these documents are in some respects *ad hoc* plans. They bear the impress of the times in which they were evolved, that is to say, while the war was in progress and at the most difficult part of it. That makes them all the more instructive. While Louis the Fourteenth was straining every nerve to repel the foe, while tens of thousands of peasants were flocking to enlist in the army, while people and Kings were showing themselves worthy of one another, the Archbishop and the Duc were dreaming of purchasing at any price, peace with dishonour. Writing in 1694, Fénelon spoke of Strassburg, Valenciennes, Maubeuge and Besançon as ill-gotten gains. This time, he was prepared to give up Arras and Cambrai, over and above the stipulated *quid pro quo*. Had he not written these words in his *Télémaque*, apropos of the wise inhabitants of Betica: 'They laugh when any one speaks to them about kings not being able to settle the boundaries of their respective countries . . . So long as there remain any lands free and uncultivated, we should not wish even to defend our own against any neighbouring peoples who might come to take possession of them.' And if the coalition viewed this sacrifice with disfavour, if the war had to go on, to whom were the armies to be intrusted? The Tables responded, 'to a general who enjoys esteem and confidence.' The possible candidates were had up for examination one by one. The best was Villeroy, the worst Villars, the future victor of Denain. The great idea of Fénelon and Chevreuse was to destroy the royal administration entrusted to a

popular executive, and to replace it by a hierarchy of assemblies devoted to the interests of the privileged classes: Diocesan assemblies, States provincial, States general. No more intendants, no more ministers. The States were no longer to be confined to the role of counsellors to the sovereign and guardians of the public purse; they were to be endowed with the executive power in all its branches. All matters relating to the administration of justice, police, finance, war, peace, alliances, agriculture and commerce were to come under their purview. It was anarchy, but it was anarchy for the benefit of the great nobles. We were to hear no more of pity for poor folks dying of hunger. The object was to delve between them and the nobility a deep moat which should remain for ever impassable. The roll of noble names was to be purged of all low-born intruders who had contrived to get themselves included therein. Marrying out of one's own caste was forbidden. The king would aid the noble families to bring up their children and to maintain their fortunes; he would reserve them appointments in the royal household, places in the army, in the orders of chivalry, posts as presidents and counselors in the High Courts. But above this mass of privileged ones, mid-way 'twixt earth and heaven, would flourish the Dukes and Peers. To them the government would be entrusted, the great honours, and the spoils of the Secretaries of State. The Third Estate ousted from the councils, government departments, superintendentships and higher tribunals, would humbly content themselves with subordinate positions as clerks and attorneys.

The *Tables de Chaulnes* did not remain a secret. Through the medium of papers, councils and consultations, their contents had already become public property, and, on the original surface, people had embroidered all kinds of things which their fancy happened to dictate. The honoured name of the Duc de Bourgogne was put forward as sponsor to these airy speculations. As for Saint Simon, he scribbled out a hundred and fifty pages of ridiculous regulations as precise as they were pettifogging. Every single little detail was provided for – carriages, costumes, cloaks, carpets, caps and pom-poms. The *tabouret* was to be taken away from the Chancellor's wife, who had basely usurped it. Such Dukes as were not on the roll were no longer to be allowed to wear shoulder knots on their cloaks and their wives' saddle cloths were no longer to be embroidered with silver or gold. As for the Order of Saint Michel, it seems that the Dauphin was indignant at seeing it wasted on savants, doctors, painters, architects, in short, on a parcel of nobodies,

and that he had made up his mind to take it away from all of them and bestow it on one hundred and fifty lords of the best families who were to wear it round the neck with the lesser collar.

That is the sort of twaddle in which the energies of these great reformers found expression. It is difficult to believe that the Duc de Bourgogne had so feeble a sense of reality as to go to such lengths as that. Nevertheless, when he died, the idea was current that he had been an opponent of the principle of absolute monarchy. This was enough to unite the various malcontents in a single hope, and, when the Regent came to have need of their support, it was on Fénelon's political programme that, atheist though he was, he based his initial policy.

On September 15th, two declarations dated from Vincennes announced the creation of six councils designed to replace the Secretaries of State and the Comptroller General, whose offices had been abolished. There was the Council of Conscience for dealing with ecclesiastical matters, the Councils of Foreign Affairs, War, Navy, Home Affairs, Finance, to which latter was subsequently added a Council of Commerce. Thus there were eight in all, including the Regency Council. Having taken forcible possession of the supreme power in his capacity as a party leader, Philippe d'Orléans could scarcely govern in any other fashion, but his native indolence and his good nature soon led him to call in the aid of as many friends and collaborators as possible. In the preamble to the declarations, he expressed the desire that 'all business should be regulated by unanimous agreement rather than by acts of authority', which meant that, having a sufficient number of posts to go round among his supporters, he was not averse to purchasing the goodwill of his adversaries by sharing with them the responsibilities of government. He retained on the Regency Council all the members named by Louis the Fourteenth, merely contenting himself with adding to them a few men of secondary note on whom he could rely: Maréchal de Bezons, his former lieutenant in Italy and Spain, the Duc de Saint Simon, and Shavigny, Bishop of Troyes, who was remarkable for belonging to no cabal, but who was intoxicated by the air of Paris a little sooner than he ought to have been. On the other hand, the Comptroller General, Desmarets was sacrificed holus-bolus and the *Conseil de Conscience* was handed over to the Jansenists, whom Louis the Fourteenth had either actively persecuted or excluded from all office: Cardinal de Noailles, Daguesseau the Procurator General, Bezons, Archbishop of Bordeaux, the Maréchal's brother, Joly de

Fleury, the Advocate General, the Abbé Pucelle, the bright star of the party. The Comte de Toulouse was president of the Navy Department; Maréchal de Villars, of the War Office; the Duc de Noailles, of the Conseil des Finances; Maréchal d'Huxelles, of the Foreign Office; the Duc d'Antin of the Home Office; and the Duc de la Force, of Commerce. These noble lords were surrounded by other noble lords, pretentious, obstructive, knowing a lot about etiquette and precious little about business, personal friends of the Regent, dashing, stubborn, witty and ignorant, and, lastly, below them, came crowding pell-mell intendants, councillors of state, *maîtres de requêtes*, presidents of parlement, hard-working men who knew their business, proud of their own competence and very impatient of the incompetence of their colleagues.

It soon became evident that this government, with its hundred heads, was incapable of getting through any serious business. Its meetings were taken up with gossip and wrangling. There were quarrels about favours and struggles for precedence. Everybody was trying to advertise himself or his relations. If, by chance, any public matter came up for discussion, it was almost impossible to bring about any measure of agreement among men so divers in temperament and upbringing. At one time, there were no less than three different policies all simultaneously pulling divergent ways. There was the official policy, which favoured the Spanish Alliance. There was the secret policy of the Regent which Dubois directed and which aimed at an alliance with England. Lastly, there was the private and particular policy of Torcy, the former Secretary of State, who made use of his position as Postmaster General to acquaint himself with Dubois' secret negotiations, so as to be in a position to blow them sky high when the proper time arrived. At the War Office, things were just as bad. After a few misunderstandings, Villars had decided that the best thing to do was to give up the reins and let the clerks get on with the work as best they could. When the meetings were on, he would read the gazette, talk about the weather, pronounce a judgment or two when the spirit moved him, conduct leisurely investigations into petty contentious matters that had not the slightest importance. As time went on, the state of affairs grew worse. The Regent while secretly trying to get everything into his own hands, was continually adding to the numbers of the Council – a mob, Saint Simon called it. In the end, the Regency Council numbered twenty-six members, not counting an ex-Secretary of State, whose sole duties consisted in bringing in the writing-

paper and snuffing the candles. 'This,' said Cellamare, who was right for once, 'was how a well-regulated government relapsed into anarchy.'

Never had the situation demanded more clear-sightedness, more energy and more promptitude. The war of the Spanish Succession had bled the Treasury white. For years past the State had been reduced to living from hand to mouth, and it had needed all the intelligence, all the ingenuity of the Comptroller-General, Desmarts, a nephew of Colbert's, to furnish our armies with the wherewithal to fight their way to victory. Now that the Great King was dead, it seemed as if catastrophe could be no longer averted. 'There was no money', little King Louis was made to say in a declaration dated December, 1715, 'either in the Royal Treasury or from revenue receipts, to meet even the most urgent expenses. We found the Crown Estate mortgaged, the public revenues swallowed up by endless administrative expenses, the proceeds of ordinary taxation spent before they were received, arrears of every description accumulated over several years, the flow of revenue intercepted and interfered with, assignments discounted in advance, the whole amounting to so huge a total that it was almost impossible to say what it came to.' In fact, so far as it is possible to arrive at any clear notion of the real state of affairs amid all this chaos, the capital value of the funded debt amounted to twelve millions, and, under various heads, that of the short term debt to a good ten million. To meet the charges on account of interest there was nothing at all available, the revenue for the year being insufficient to cover even half the current expenses.

The Finance Council, which had inherited the reversion of Desmarts's office, showed no conspicuous gifts of imagination. It had recourse to the old system of *visas*, chambers of justice, reduction of government interest, converting paper into still more paper. Still it should be placed to the credit of those concerned, that they did not declare the country completely bankrupt, as Saint Simon had urged them to do. Diminution of pensions, suppression of life annuities, compulsory conversions, reductions of capital – every possible form of partial bankruptcy was put into operation, but (and it seems amazing) they did not excite any violent protests or tumultuous indignation. To begin with, the King's debts were, in a manner, his own personal concern. Now that he was dead, his successor could only be expected to repay them as and when he was able. Thus many contemporary memorialists look upon his attitude as one of signal generosity, for he might have repudiated them alto-

gether. In the second place, interest payments on Government Stock were neither then nor in 1789 distributed among the mass of the population as they are to-day. Public opinion looked on the *rentier*, or investor in government securities, somewhat in the light of a usurer who had taken advantage of the misfortunes of the country to advance it money at a ruinous rate of interest, so that, now, at the first rift in the clouds, people rejoiced when they saw the government preparing to clip the wings of its creditors.

At the same time, with a great display of importance, the Council created a Commission of Enquiry with a mandate to prosecute those who were guilty of malversation of the public funds, of taking illicit profits on contracts for war munitions, of actions tending to undermine the credit of the State and of speculating on the bills and rescripts of tax-farmers. Lastly it was given out that there were to be big cuts in public expenditure. Economy is a blessed word that never fails of its effect on the French people. There were some resounding trials; half a dozen big financiers were clapped into the Bastille and their property confiscated. There were examinations, arrests, domiciliary visits, distrains, fines, scandals and suicides. Virtue and vice were full in the limelight. Commissaries hacked away with giant blows at all the undergrowth of minor offices, which fell by the hundred beneath the axe – comptrollers, inspectors, sub-inspectors, treasurers, mayors, consuls, bailiffs – a whole army of costly and useless puppets. They were put in the pillory. The mob hooted and stoned the hapless tax-gatherers. Public opinion was satisfied, Cerberus was appeased.

All these demonstrations were more noisy than efficacious. The amounts ordered to be repayed by the Chamber of Justice only amounted to 220 millions of francs, of which part was payable in government stock or in depreciated securities. On the other hand, the savings amounted to round about forty millions a year. Useful reforms in the accountancy system, and the control of the public moneys, barred the door against the recurrence of similar abuses in the future. The Duc de Noailles, president of the Finance Council, boasted that he had increased revenue and diminished expenditure, simplified the machinery of government and encouraged the transformation of direct taxes. In point of fact his merits were not so striking. But at any rate he had given the State the means to live and had preserved the country from the worst of the disasters which threatened it.

In their inmost minds, Noailles and his counsellors believed in the



fundamental solvency of the country. Their main object had been to gain time. The future would take care of the rest. If the critical years could be got over without disaster, economic activity would be automatically restored, the wealth squandered on the war would be recovered little by little, and the taxes would come in more abundantly and more readily. What was wanted, then, was a little order and economy to replenish the Treasury and set trade on its legs again. The idea was not such a bad one. Many a statesman has made himself a big reputation with still less to his credit. But in this particular instance, it came wide of the mark, because France herself was suffering from an ill that hampered her recovery, and that ill was an insufficiency of hard cash, of liquid assets. In the sixteenth century, after the discovery of the American mines, money had been extraordinarily abundant in Europe. Spain was flooded with it. In France the quantity of precious metal was increased tenfold. Wheat prices soared, higher salaries were demanded, and people with fixed incomes found themselves in evil plight; all of which phenomena the old writers examined with fear and trembling. But as the years went on, the tide slowed down. The rate of production and exchange caught up, and finally outstripped, the rate of monetary increase. By 1650, the rise had been arrested. By 1660, there were signs of a turn of the tide. By 1670, the slump had become general. In 1700, there had been a drop of forty per cent all round. The metal reserves were no longer sufficient to meet the increased demands of commerce and industry. The effects of the monetary stringency were everywhere apparent. The Government endeavoured to create fresh means of payment. On five or six successive occasions, the Comptrollers General debased the coinage, that is to say that, while keeping the nominal value constant, they diminished the actual quantity of gold or silver in each denomination. Louis the Fourteenth sent his plate to be melted down, and invited subjects to follow his example. Short term bills were issued. The Treasury even went to the length of printing paper money, but the instruments so created had practically no currency outside Paris and they soon began to decline in value. The situation was still so critical that Vauban advised the King to collect taxes in kind for the future, instead of in money. The truth was there was but one remedy, and that was a recourse to credit. Not Government credit of course. The public had had a taste of that and had lost their appetite for royal paper. No, what was wanted was a brand new credit, virgin and untouched, the credit of an issuing bank to be

especially created with every guarantee calculated to inspire confidence. Places abroad had set the example: Amsterdam, London Genoa and Venice. Hosts of people came with their plans and urged their adoption. Anyhow the credit idea was in the air. Desmaretz and Samuel Bernard had studied the matter long before the death of Louis the Fourteenth, and it is probable that if the latter had lived, it would have been tried out as early as 1715, and possibly under the direction of that same John Law whose name dominates all the financial policy of the Regency, just as its foreign policy is always associated with the name of Dubois.

Law was the son of an Edinburgh goldsmith who had made a fortune out of dealings in discount and exchange, though, on his mother's side, he was connected with the noble house of Argyll. Well favoured, engaging, cheerful, refined, he was well versed in the arts of seduction. His youth had been spent in love-making, revelry and duels. He squandered his money, killed one of his rivals, was arrested, condemned to death, liberated and again arrested. He was about to be executed when he escaped from the Tower, got away by the skin of his teeth, took refuge in Holland, speculated, gambled, won and repaired his shattered fortunes. In all questions concerning money he was passionately interested, not so much from greed and ambition, as from an anxiety to get to the bottom of things and to understand. In his active brain, remarkably well endowed for rapid calculation, he turned over and over again the various things the economists had laid down regarding the origin and distribution of wealth. Money, credit, exchange, commerce – on all these things he had come to his own conclusions. He rushed all over Europe to verify them and put them to the test. He was seen in Germany, Italy, Venice, Genoa, Florence and Naples. He sailed for Scotland and laid his 'Considerations concerning Coinage' before the Parliament there. The Parliament paid no heed. He then sought refuge in London, was deported and, crossing to the continent again, settled down in Paris. Chamillart, the Comptroller General, granted him two or three audiences. Unfortunately Law was too fond of Faro. He was denounced to the police as a card-sharper and expelled from the city. Adrift on the roads again, he went from one capital to another, offering his knowledge to the various governments. But the governments had no faith in his talents. The Duc de Savoie did not want to be made rich by him. Nor did the Emperor. Once more Law went back to chance his luck in Paris. Since his first stay there, things had gone from bad to worse. This time,

people were dazzled by the man, by his unbounded confidence in himself and by all the marvels he vowed he would accomplish. Trade should begin again, industry should wake once more, the countryside should flourish anew, the towns should be rolling in money and the government be able to pay off its load of debt. A miracle? Did anybody wonder how it was going to be done? Well, Law would explain. He juggled with millions; his pockets were bulging with schemes, his head was crammed with arguments, his hands were up to the elbows in gold. Desmarets, now completely at the end of his tether, without a plan, without a single idea, was only too eager to welcome a *deus ex machina*. Moreover, seeing how things were, they couldn't become much worse. Anyhow, there was no harm in trying.

Even Louis the Fourteenth was fated to rise to the bait. It all seemed plain sailing, when the King died. Desmarets was dismissed. The Council of Finance took on his office and the Council hated anything new. Law was not discouraged. He tackled the Regent. Once more he demonstrated how incompetent Noailles was, how inadequate his measures, and how absurd his conduct of affairs. The Regent listened. He concurred, and Law had his way.

Did the Scotsman entirely convince him? He may have done. Between two such minds as these, both equally bold, subtle and brilliant, there were bound to be some natural affinities. But, above all, the Regent was anxious to bring off some triumphant *coup*. For a year now his star had been on the wane. The new alliances, of whose real object the public were unaware, were essentially unpopular. The country was still eagerly anti-Austrian, and passionately anti-English. Against the Regent's personal policy there was a Spanish movement on foot in France which had its ramifications among all classes. And then again, the Chamber of Justice made too many people anxious, the Council of Finance threatened too many vested interests. To compel the war profiteers to disgorge a part of their ill-gotten gains, to abolish privilege, to reduce government interest, to cut down pensions and to ask the taxpayer to bear his part of the general burden, to make everyone pay, and pay a lot, all this would have been a fine programme. But to carry it out successfully would have needed a strong government, firmly seated in the saddle, and unanimously supported by public opinion. Neither of these two conditions was fulfilled. Bleeding the lower and middle classes was a process which, in the long run, was bound to cause trouble, and to strengthen the position of Philip the Fifth and the

legitimised Princes. Law's system involved neither hardships, nor taxes, nor suffering; it was the line of least resistance, the ready way, the path of illusion. The Regent listened to the voice of the charmer and, following in his footsteps, France passed on her way into the world of make-believe.

Law left behind him no complete outline of his theory. Everything he wrote, letters or memoirs, are but fragmentary explanations, jotted down to fit the circumstances of the moment. They do not hang together, and contain formulas that are mutually exclusive, and definitions that will not coalesce. The ideas are brilliant rather than stable. There are repetitions, strange expressions and downright errors. Nevertheless, these things do not prevent his statement being of extraordinary interest, and in some respects, surprisingly new.

As with all the economists of his time, Law's avowed aim was to develop the wealth and power of the State. Wealth and power have their source in trade, industry, the number of inhabitants, good farming and in a plentiful supply of the necessities of life. But in order to put life into the various parts of the social organism, we must have a motive power, or rather a current, a fluid, which shall set them all in motion. That is the function of money. 'Money is to the State, what the blood is to the human body. Without the one, we cannot live. Without the other we cannot act. Circulation is necessary to both alike.' But, since the only real wealth of the human race consists of goods and merchandise, the sort of money we use is of small moment, provided it be a serviceable instrument of exchange. People have generally made use of precious metals for the purpose, because their value is looked upon as stable, or, at the worst, as the least liable to fluctuation. But in fact, since the mines of America have been brought into commission, the value of silver has depreciated by one half. As for silver currency, the government makes what changes it likes in its weight and face value. Then, again, look at all the inconveniences that arise from this craze for stability. Metal is heavy, cumbersome, inconvenient to carry. Owing to its weight, and the risks which accompany its transit, it greatly increases the perils and complexities of settlements on a large scale. Paper money, on the other hand, admits of easier and more rapid circulation. It can be divided without loss since it may be exchanged against notes of lower denominations. Owing to the ease with which it passes from hand to hand, it accelerates the pulse of the exchange-market, and stimulates the rate of production.

Moreover, as soon as the credit-system has been incorporated into general use, the majority of payments will be effected by credit-notes and debit-notes, mere book entries, without any money actually passing.

In putting forward this plea for the credit-bank system, Law displayed powers of reasoning and dialectic which have probably never been surpassed. But when it came to estimating the amount of paper to be put into circulation, his ideas became vague and nebulous in the extreme. He did not admit that there was any necessary connection between the bank's metal reserves and the number of notes which it printed. No doubt, to begin with, a certain amount of cash is indispensable in order to inspire confidence and to meet possible demands for withdrawal. As soon as the public accustom themselves to handling notes, the issue might be allowed to outstrip the cash reserves indefinitely. But suppose there was a panic. Well, then the State would have to fix the rate. That *non-sequitur* stultified the whole idea, inasmuch as, at one stroke, it nullified all the advantages of the note system. The fact was, of course, that Law never for a moment thought that such a thing would come to pass, first because he had so much faith in the credit idea, which he looked on as an inexhaustible gold mine capable of yielding riches *ad infinitum*, and, secondly, because he felt sure he could adjust the rate of the issue to the necessities of the case and always maintain a healthy equilibrium between circulation and demand; in other words between the distribution of the paper currency and the development of trade. A remarkable idea, but one most fertile in consequences. For, in order to keep pace with the monetary requirements of the country, Law was led on into developing his concern on a scale that became ever more and more colossal, till, at last, it embraced all the key industries of the country.

It would be taking a very inadequate view of the system to look on it merely as a case of monetary inflation. Law's Bank was not simply an institution for discounting bills and floating new issues; it was a banking business in the ordinary sense, a trust, and a public benefit society rolled into one, and, in the course of time, it secured for itself the collection and regulation of taxes, as well as monopolies in respect of tobacco, ship-building and over-seas trade. There was never a beaver-skin, bale of cotton, sack of spice or pound of sugar sold in the whole kingdom which had not passed across its counters. France-beyond-the-seas belonged to it. Its counters were the counters of the State; its strong boxes were the strong boxes of the

Treasury. Its employees were to be seen everywhere – at the customs, the *octroi*, the subsidy office, the *gabelle*. Slowly but surely, it encroached and encroached, till every taxpayer was a customer; every *rentier* a shareholder. What makes the whole thing more amazing still is that it all happened within a space of less than five years. In May, 1716, Law created his bank. In August, 1717, he started a *Compagnie d'Occident* for exploiting Senegal, the West Indies, Canada and Louisiana. In January, 1718, he was at loggerheads with the political Big-wigs, who began to look askance at this rising plutocracy. He won the day. At the end of the year, the bank became the Royal Bank. The Company adopted the name of the India Company, absorbed the East India Company, the China Company and the Africa Company. In August, 1719, it was entrusted with the collection of the indirect taxes. In October, the order was extended to include direct taxes as well. On January 6th, 1720, Law, a recent convert, was appointed Controller-General of Finance. It was his apogee.

But, though you might not have suspected it, the building was shaky. Law was a money manipulator, and not, properly speaking, a man of business. He looked at everything from the point of view of pure accountancy, banking and stock-jobbing. He even deceived himself with regard to the value of his concerns. Of the various enterprises he had amalgamated in his one great India Company, some were prosperous and held out the certain promise of big profits, others were very much more speculative. Tobacco, the Mint, Tax-Farming represented an annual revenue of twenty millions. But the record of the Colonial Companies contained the tale of many failures. The profitable development of Louisiana, the wealth of which was portrayed in dazzling colours, was going to be, in reality, a long, difficult and costly undertaking. Eventually, no doubt, it would bring in a handsome return, but a deal of wealth and a deal of labour would have to be expended on it before that return was realized. Once the stock was placed and quoted, once its upward tendency was assured, Law looked on the work as three parts done. This illusion of his led him into all manner of wild-cat speculations. If one of them happened to turn up trumps, the success would turn his head.

From the start, he had conceived the idea of associating his companies with the repayment of the National Debt. The Bank had been founded with a capital of six millions in five thousand shares of 1200 livres each, but, in fact, no more than the first quarter

had ever been called up, and even of that quarter, only a quarter had been payable in cash, the balance being represented by depreciated and discredited government notes. Thus, it was with the ridiculously small sum of 375,000 francs that the Scotsman had started operations. The first year, he discounted some sixty millions of paper of various kinds in exchange for an equal quantity of notes. This was unquestionably an exploit, but it was a dangerous one, for the bank had scarcely any liquid assets available to meet any unexpected demands for repayment that might have been made upon it, and it would have been utterly without resources to cope with a panic, even a minor one. When the *Compagnie d'Occident* was formed, the entire capital – a hundred million – was subscribed in government securities. Not a farthing was paid in cash. To colonize countries several times bigger than France, the Company had no more funds available than the annuity of four hundred millions paid over by the exchequer in respect of debt redemption. It therefore became necessary, before very long, to have recourse to increases of capital: twenty-five million in June, 1719; twenty-five million in July; one hundred million in September; sixty-two million in October. Shares of the nominal value of 500 livres, were issued at 5,000, an enormous premium. But, once again, the subscribers were enabled to foot the bill with Government Stock. Little by little, the Company was becoming the State's one and only creditor. At the same time, the Stock held by the Company bore interest at the rate of three per cent, instead of four, that is forty-eight millions in all, instead of sixty-four.

On paper, the economy was indisputable, and the arrangement advantageous to the King. In reality, it was a piece of financial juggling. Government Securities, with a fixed rate of interest, were in no way speculative. They trundled along at their real value. But the shares of the Company which replaced them, glittered and glowed with all the imaginary treasures of the Mississippi. The talk was all of rocks of diamond, mountains of gold and grottoes of emerald. There were posters displaying to the admiring gaze of the shareholders vast stretches of cornfields, countless herds of sheep and cattle, forests of wood for dyeing and furniture-making. Amid this plentitude of Nature's gifts, colonists, reclining at their ease on luxurious rugs, accepted with gestures of indolent condescension the presents which the native women of the Mississippi proffered them on bended knee. To Paris was brought a troop of savages, complete with feathers and elaborate tatooings, who followed a

'Queen of the Missouri' in obsequious procession. The Court loaded them with gifts. They went stag-hunting in the Bois de Boulogne, and danced at the Théâtre des Italiens. Finally, the Queen of the Missouri married a sergeant of the guards, named Dubois, who, to his royal alliance, owed his promotion to the rank of sub-lieutenant. The *rentiers* of yesterday imagined themselves the millionaires of to-morrow. Speculation became a frenzy; madness reigned supreme.

In his plans for regulating the note issue according to the needs of the country, Law had given the word 'need' far too elastic a connotation. If the system was to hold good, it was necessary that the notes should only have been employed in useful undertakings. As a matter of fact this enormous mass of paper was not employed in trade at all. By far the larger part of it went to furnish the wherewithal for speculation, that is to say it represented no real wealth in the shape of goods, land, or manufactured articles, but only another mass of paper, stock inflated by the excitement of the speculators to an extent wholly unjustified by the actual circumstances. Himself a gambler, Law had come to look upon gambling as a necessity just as imperious, just as natural as eating and drinking. Before every increase of capital, before every fresh call for funds, a decree of the Council of State gave orders for the printing of 100 or 200 millions of notes, which went to support the rise. By the end of 1719, the billion mark had been passed, but shares of the nominal value of 500 livres stood as high as twelve thousand. At the beginning of 1720 they went up one day to 18,000.

At this rate, the paper created, or taken over by Law, represented more than ten billions, and these ten billions were feeding a roaring torrent of transactions. The Bourse was set up in the open air in the Rue Quincampoix, between the Rue Saint Denis and the Rue Saint Martin, close to the Rue des Lombards. This was the traditional hunting-ground of money-changers, bankers and usurers. At the end of the reign of Louis the Fourteenth, a sort of semi-clandestine market in *rentes* and Government securities was carried on there. When Law's shares came into the speculator's ambit, the scene of the operations was quite naturally transferred to the same spot. The street was closed at each end by iron gates, which the guards opened at seven every morning. A swarming crowd, of all sorts and conditions, rushed into the confined space, pushing and shoving as hard as they could, and there they remained until nine at night. There were ninety houses on either side, and these were



crammed from top to bottom with scribes who kept a record of the business done. Deals took place in the shops, on the pavement, up the staircases, in the cellars and even on the housetops. Country folk swarmed up from the provinces, having sold their land to buy paper. Women sold their jewellery and their lace for a song. In the ebb and flow of Fortune's tide were to be seen a dubious crowd of curio-dealers, pimps, panders and parasites. They snatched up whatever remnants the ruined gamblers might still have left. The successful ones they importuned with wheedling offers of all manner of things – a carriage, a town-house, a mistress, silver-plate, anything and everything. Lackeys suddenly became millionaires, flaunted it in the carriages of their former masters, and sometimes absent-mindedly got up behind instead of inside. People are said to have made fortunes in a few days, or even a few hours. An *abbé* won eighteen million, a waiter thirty, a sweep forty, a beggar seventy, a dressmaker a hundred. 'God, Himself,' said Montesquieu, 'does not conjure beings more swiftly from the void.' These upstarts indulged in a tremendous amount of display, strutted about like turkey-cocks, bought country mansions, gave elaborate entertainments, married into noble families, and then, one fine day disappeared into the blue.

When the Bank was transferred to the Rue Richelieu, the crowd squeezed into the gardens; an interminable queue, kept in order by the military, shoved its way towards the counters in a compact column, which neither hunger nor thirst could daunt. Some people had the life literally crushed out of them. Wedged in among the mass of people and borne along by them, they still continued to advance. It was not until they arrived at the end of their journey that they were discovered to be dead. Law was besieged by duchesses who kissed his hands and begged and prayed for shares. 'A little while ago,' recounts the Princess Palatine, the Regent's mother, 'a number of ladies were in conference with Law when he said he would have to leave them. They would not let him, and he was obliged to explain why he wanted to go so badly. "Oh, if that's all," they said, "do it where you are, and get on with the business". And they stopped with him all the time.'

However, on 'Change, there is one maxim that is always sure to come true and that is 'After the rise, comes the fall'. At the general meeting, held on December 30th, 1719, Law had announced a dividend of 40 per cent, but, with the price at 10,000, his 40 was only 2 per cent. Dealers who had kept their heads began to see the

real position of affairs, and, not satisfied with selling their stock, they went to the bank to exchange their notes for cash. The news leaked out. There had always been a bear party in the Rue Quincampoix, egged on by Law's enemies: dismissed tax-farmers, rival and sceptical bankers. In 1719, they had tried to put the bank in a tight corner by suddenly presenting several millions worth of notes for repayment. In 1720, instigated by Stair, certain Englishmen, alarmed at Law's commercial operations, joined in the bear movement. As soon as confidence was the least bit shaken, all the defects of the scheme came to light: inadequate cash reserves, excessive inflation of the paper currency, huge over-capitalization of the Company, unsatisfactory progress in Louisiana. From one day to another, there were enormous fluctuations in prices, soaring to-day, coming down with a crash to-morrow. But despite these oscillations, it became clear that the boom was over. In a few days the shares fell from 18,000 livres to 10,000 then to 9,000. Enthusiasm swiftly gave place to panic. People fought to sell, as fiercely as they had fought to buy, and the slump in the shares immediately impaired the stability of the notes which were involved in the same rout. Frenzied shareholders rushed to the offices to surrender their notes for anything they could get. Others exchanged their paper against real property, houses, land, or goods; anything, no matter what, so long as it was not Law and the Mississippi. The Duc de Bourbon and the Prince de Conti contrived to break into Law's house, and drove off with millions worth of gold in their carriages. The Duc d'Estrées made off with the chocolate, and Duc de la Force with the candles, the Duc d'Antin with the bales of cloth. There were fights to a finish in the Rue Quincampoix. A gentleman of noble family, the Comte de Horn, 'grandson of the Prince de Ligne and a kinsman of the Regent', dragged a broker into a tavern, stabbed him to death and stole his wallet. Horn was arrested, sentenced to death and put on the wheel in the place de Grève. The Lieutenant of Police made use of this murder as a pretext for dispersing all gatherings in the Rue Quincampoix and transferring the money-market to the Place Vendôme. In the centre were hastily erected hoardings of wood and canvas behind which there crowded together pell-mell, cheek by jowl, money-changers, brokers, restaurant-keepers, jewellers, old clothes dealers, sharpers and panders of every description. Assailed by a horde of enemies, hooted and threatened by the mob, Law fought like a tiger. Against the torrent that threatened to engulf his work, he set up the boldest, the wisest, the maddest, the vainest, the

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unlikeliest of all plans: No payments over a hundred livres to be made in gold, rationing of the amount of coin allowed each person for his personal use, domiciliary visits carried out on people suspected of hoarding coin, absorption of the Bank by the Company, constant variation in the gold and silver currency, closing the *marché à terme*, making the Company's shares legal tender in all business transaction, intensified advertising of the marvels of the Mississippi, solemn departure of colonists sharked up from the prisons and haunts of vice, fifty per cent written off the face-value of shares and notes, redemption of shares by the Company itself; issue of *rentes* and opening of current accounts for the absorption of unused notes.

The whole thing collapsed. Confidence had gone. Every day, there were scenes of rioting outside Law's offices where, every now and again, at long intervals, the Bank made such cash payments as were still in its power – 10 livres per person – three times a week. After the butchery that marked the night of the 16-17 July, these repayments ceased entirely. On October 10th, 1720, an order of the Court suspended the circulation of the notes as from November 1st. The Company's shares dropped to one louis, and Law, deprived of his office, received his passports for the Netherlands. He was completely ruined.

### CHAPTER III

## A CHECK TO THE NOBLES' REVOLT

THE word Regency has had a singularly diversified fortune. Derived from the dictionaries of constitutional law, where it signified a bastard regime, it is used to-day to denote a period-style, a fashion in art, a certain intellectual attitude, a particular phase of society. It is a word which calls up only gracious images, *fêtes galantes*, a delicate atmosphere, refined and careless people, love-makings, junketings, masks and stringed instruments. And then, under the word itself and all these varied implications, there is something else, a name, the name of a man, of an artist, to wit Watteau; and in that name the genius, the spirit of a whole age is summed up.

Alas, that dates and hard facts should come rudely pushing their way in to shatter this seductive picture. Watteau, who died two years before the Regent, was born in 1684. He was made an Academician in 1712, and, although he only took his seat in 1717, the picture which won him the distinction, *l'Embarquement*, had been conceived and put in hand well before the death of Louis the Fourteenth, so that this picture, which breathes the very spirit of the Regency, this masterpiece of grace and voluptuousness would appear to be a legacy from what is called the stifling tyranny of Madame de Maintenon. In point of fact, Watteau lived in a world of make-believe. His tender melancholy and rather morbid disposition sundered him from his own times. Sober, reserved, candid of soul, incapable of any sort of depravity, he would have been singularly ill at ease in the drinking bouts and debaucheries of the Palais-Royal. If there is, in his work, the military pictures apart, any reflection of the period, it is a reflection of the theatre, the mirage of a mirage, a shadow's shadow. The reality was by no means so fine, and the round-ups of trollops for shipment to the Mississippi bore but the faintest resemblance to the Pilgrimage to Cythera.

The personnel of the Regency was recruited from the men whom Louis the Fourteenth had kept at arm's length. The majority of them had already seen a good deal of life. In 1715, the Regent was forty-one, Dubois fifty-nine, Broglie forty-four, d'Effiat seventy-seven, Canillac forty-six, the Grand Prior de Vendôme sixty. Freed

from the controlling influence of the King, they now said out loud what they had long been whispering under their breath, and did openly and unblushingly the things which they had hitherto done by stealth. They flung themselves into a life of godlessness, excess and vice, like men taking their revenge for long years of tedious repression. The more they had lied and dissembled, the more scandal and noise they liked to create. Moreover, the war had not ended until 1714. As long as it lasted, Louis the Fourteenth had imposed on his entourage a becoming decency and restraint. Peace being at length restored, people were eager to shake off the memory of those bad old days. They longed to stretch their limbs, to laugh, to have a good time, to get their teeth well into life. Law's system had completed the general mix-up of classes and manners. All the conditions of a great moral crisis were simultaneously at hand: fortunes made in a day, millionaires promoted from the slums, speculators with frayed nerves, *nouveaux riches* trying to live like lords, lords kow-towing to the profiteers, reckless extravagance, the demoralising spectacle of wealth gained without lifting a finger, and then the sequel to it all – panic, ruin, apprehension for the morrow, the terrible feeling that the means of subsistence for yourself and your children are crumbling away, and, amid this all-pervading terror, the feeling that you must go and do something reckless to make yourself forget it.

The Regency is a record of misery, extravagance and folly. Whilst some are dying of hunger and cold, others are dancing, revelling, carousing and feasting. Thrice a week, in winter-time, there was a masked ball at the Opera. There's nothing like wearing a disguise if you want to have an adventure. In the summer, the dancers would wander off, in little groups, into the bosky recesses of the Champs-Élysées. 'Immorality is general and frightful', writes the agèd Madame. 'All the young people of both sexes in France are living the most reprehensible of lives. The more lawless their conduct, the better they are pleased. . . . They comport themselves like the beasts of the field.' The great thing was to be drunk every night. One night, at the Prince de Conti's, the guests, swollen with wine, rushed at each other and fought like fish-porters. The lackeys found them sleeping off their drunken bout amid a clutter of broken plates and dishes. The Bishop of Beauvais, who had hitherto lived a blameless life, took to himself a mistress whom he installed in the Episcopal palace and took out for a drive every day in his state carriage. To put a stop to this scandal, they bundled the

young woman into the penitentiary of the Madelonnettes. With tears streaming down his face, the bishop came crying piteously for her release, whereon the Regent replied, 'there are girls enough in Paris without her.' The bishop understood, restrained his tears and found others to console him. They soon brought him to ruin. It was at last decided to shut him up in a Cistercian Abbey.

The Marquise de Mesle and the Marquise de Polignac were both of them in love with the Marquis d'Alincourt. They arranged a meeting behind the Invalides and fought with knives. Both were wounded; one in the breast, the other in the face.

Death itself was flouted. The body of one Nigon, an advocate, was exposed on a bier in the cloisters of Saint German l'Auxerrois, tapers around the coffin, the body covered with a mort-cloth. Along came the Duc d'Arenberg who lodged in the neighbourhood. Some friends and lackeys accompanied him, carrying glasses and bottles. One of them strode up to the coffin, lifted the cloth and thus apostrophised the dead man: 'My poor Nigon, what are you doing there? Come and have a drink with us.' Another of them leapt astride the coffin and emptied a ewer of holy-water over the head. 'Come, have a drop, my poor Nigon. You must be dying of thirst.' The clergy came on the scene. The Duc and his companions followed along behind the procession singing all manner of ribald songs. The priests protested; whereon the Duc and his companions heaped insults upon them, forced their way into the church, invaded the choir stalls and kept shouting out Alleluias. The police were called in and everyone was arrested except the Duc, who had fallen down dead drunk in the middle of the road.

The bad example came from above. After a short stay at Vincennes, the little King was brought back to Paris, to the Tuileries, but as he was not of an age to hold a Court, the Court was dispersed. Everyone retired to his own abode, there to live without restraint. Every night the Regent gave a supper-party at the Palais-Royal. The gatherings were brilliant but intimate, the guests always being selected from the same narrow circle. There were a few women: the official mistress, Madame de Parabère, her rivals Mesdames de Sabran, d'Averne and de Falari, Madame de Prie, the Duchesse de Gesvres, Madame du Deffand, Madame de Tencin, all very much be-scented, all with their hair short, in accordance with the fashion, and frizzed and powdered, wearing long dresses very full at the bottom drawn up by light paniers and made of Indian silk as soft as tissue. Among the men were Broglie, Noce, Brancas, Biron,

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Canillac, some other young gentlemen with no names to boast of, but distinguished for their wit and their profligate behaviour. Big, strapping fellows stood in the doorway, safeguarding the guests against the intrusion of bores and interruption from affairs of State. There was a deal of talking and laughing and drinking. Aphorisms, ideas and other people's characters were sported and juggled with. The wines were good; champagne and tokay. The fun would wax ever faster and more furious. Ribaldry was bandied about with an entire lack of restraint, one endeavouring to out-blaspheme another. By daybreak, everyone was drunk. Then the party would break up, only to begin again on the morrow.

At the Luxembourg was housed the Duchesse du Berry, the Regent's favourite daughter. Married at fifteen, a widow at nineteen, she died at twenty-four, after filling the world with the rumour of her startling adventures. Haughty and insolent, madly addicted to pleasure and diversion, never going forth unless attended by guards and trumpeters, she nevertheless had a passion for disreputable company. It was her delight to sink to the lowest depths. Talking ribaldry and listening to obscene stories, afforded her a sort of voluptuous pleasure. She also loved to get as drunk as Chloe, drinking till she rolled on the floor or vomiting at the table, bespattering the guests around her. Her frenzied transports of love-making were absolutely incredible. Her lovers were legion. She picked them up no matter where. The last of them, Riou, was a fat, yellowish-green creature. He was a mass of pimples, and looked like an abscess. His face was all puffy, his head was too big for his body and he had a neck like a bull. This creature, that looked like a heathen idol, exercised the worst of all possible tyrannies over the Duchesse, the tyranny of the senses. She simply smothered him with gold. This walking mass of money, jewels and diamonds had the secret of making people fear and yet desire him. He had so accustomed her to obey his slightest wish, that he had reduced her to the lowest depths of servitude. He gloried in scolding her in public, would order her to change her clothes a dozen times without the slightest reason, compelled her to dismiss the women friends she cared for, ordered her to wait on him at table, and insisted that she should send round every night to take his orders for the next day. The Duchesse moaned, wept, and grovelled before him, wallowing in the slough of her servitude and humiliation.

But here is the strange thing; how came it that this Regent, with all his cleverness, all his brains, so richly endowed with gifts and

graces, how came it that this princess whose intellectual birthright was of so rare an order, that all these women with their charm, that all these men so wide awake, how came it that this, the very cream of the aristocracy, descended to a life so debasing, to such depths of degradation, to such dull, monotonous orgies, which began and ended, and began again with a kind of routine, clockwork regularity? We are familiar with the diatribes poured forth by Saint Simon against Louis the Fourteenth and his sordid, middle-class reign. But Louis the Fourteenth was dead, and his ministers sent into obscurity. Now Dukes were dotted about everywhere. The councils were peppered with titles and prefixes of nobility, the aristocracy of France had got the moon it had cried for, it was loaded with power and prerogatives. But, once again, it gave proof that, left to its own devices, it was incapable of governing the country. Saint Simon, who was the most honest man among them, said freely and frankly that he had not the necessary competence to undertake the various executive duties which the Regent designed for him. Others, less scrupulous than Saint Simon, tumbled over one another in their eagerness to capture sinecures and pensions. The fools snarled and squabbled with each other about questions of precedence, the brazen ones took a pride in flaunting their greed and licentiousness and so earning the contempt and hatred of the people. Nearly all of them, now that they were in power, displayed the same effrontery and discontent, the same disposition to scheme and plot, which had characterised them when in opposition. And just at this juncture, the world of fashion was reading with eager interest the memoirs of Retz which had just appeared. Before the scorching fire of this narrative, ambitious minds were warming up their courage. The Regent, Dubois, the Princes of the Blood, the Dukes, the illegitimate Princes, the Parlement: every faction had its pamphleteers, who dragged the names of their adversaries in the mud. Impertinence became a trade, a business, and Voltaire, just then emerging into prominence, was one of the shining exponents of the art.

The legal lights of the monarchy had re-erected, stone by stone, the Roman idea of the State as the supreme expression of political power, sole arbiter of destiny and interests, an immaterial and sovereign being whom men were proud to serve, themselves sharing in the effulgence of its beams. Now that State existed no longer. For the Regent, the State was a piece of property to be taken possession of; for Dubois, it was a red hat to be won; for the gilded and be-titled mob it meant prerogatives to be grabbed, favours to be



hunted for. It was a family estate, which the heirs were wasting and devouring. There was no one left to remind them that the State is above the individual. It was a case of everyone for himself: parasites, not servants.

The shortcomings of this personnel were not immediately apparent. The opening days of the Regency had shone like the dawn of a new era. People rejoiced in their new-found liberty, and beguiled themselves with boundless hopes. It was all so strange and new, and everybody was up in the skies. The Parlement with its political prerogatives and powers of remonstrance restored, carried on a tournament of politeness with His Royal Highness. No one had a good word to say for the fallen ministers. No jarring note disturbed the harmony of the popular acclamations. But when they came up against facts, these illusions broke and vanished. The old difficulties re-appeared, complicated still further by the intrigues, the negligence and the rivalries of those whose business it was to solve them. On every side there were grounds for anxiety: the Duchesse du Maine's plot; unrest in Brittany, popular dissatisfaction with the Regent's English policy; discontent of the *rentiers*; the constant encroachments by the Parlement; opposition of the Courts to Law's Bank; financial troubles. The Councils were wilting beneath the weight of their responsibilities. Whether they liked it or no, they would have to look among the office-holders of the previous reign for a man with sufficient courage and experience to cope with the storm that was brewing. The Chancellor, Daguesseau, was an eminent magistrate, an excellent lawyer, urbane, religious, peace-loving, but not a very forthcoming personage in time of trouble. He was relieved of the seals of office, and they were transferred to the Lieutenant of Police, Marc René d'Argenson who, from the hands of Noailles, also received the control of the Finance Department (January, 1718).

Coustou has left us a bust of him which is thrilling with life, magnificent in its ugliness; an immense forehead, a long, pointed turned-up nose, little piercing eyes, an appearance of emaciation the more accentuated by an enormous wig, the ringlets of which descend in a tangled mass down to his very waist. D'Argenson was sable from head to foot. The sight of him was enough to scare you; but as soon as you clapped eyes on him you could not take them off again, so full of fire was his expression, seeming to pierce right through the very breast of you; a man of first-class brain, courageous, bold, intrepid in popular disturbances, an indefatigable worker, an ardent

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servant of authority, a lover of discipline and able to inspire it, he had brought the populace into such a thorough state of organization that he was said to know all about the conduct and the habits of every individual Parisian. Moreover, he was as wide awake as he was energetic, showing himself indulgent and moderate whenever he could, never identifying himself with the extremists, capable of displaying kindness, of unbending, and, where his friends were concerned, of something warmer still, of geniality and charm.

When one of his sons, a counsellor in the Parlement, was recounting to him, with a great abundance of detail, the manner in which the members of the Judicature were setting themselves up against the Royal Authority, the new Keeper of the Seals interrupted him, saying: 'My son, has this Parlement of yours got any troops? We have fifteen thousand men on our side. You see? That's the whole thing in a nutshell.'

No sooner was he in office, than he got down to work. Blow followed blow and the Parlement was humbled, soundly rated and reduced to silence. The bastard Princes were degraded and compelled to resume the status of ordinary peers; the Duchesse du Maine was shut up in the Bastille; the Duke, her husband, was imprisoned at Doullens; the Cardinal de Polignac was exiled to an abbey.

The Breton nobility began to show signs of restiveness. The Parlement of Rennes put forth remonstrances, the Estates forbade the levying of taxes. With signal astuteness, d'Argenson abolished the more unpopular duties. Then, having thus pacified the public, he suspended the recalcitrant magistrates and sent them, one after another, to rusticate in distant and uncongenial surroundings. A bailiff forced his way into the Court Room, seized the minutes and ripped out the pages on which the remonstrances were recorded.

Sixty-two nobles who had been turned out of the *États de Bretagne*, formed themselves into a Breton Defence League. The League obtained a large number of signatures, but very few adherents who were disposed to risk a revolt. Moreover, the secret was ill kept. The Government got to know that the conspirators had formed an insurrectionary organization in Brittany, that they had deputed one of their number to sound Philip the Fifth of Spain on their behalf and to ask him for arms and money, that, under cover of hunting parties, armed councils were held at various châteaux. As the refusals to pay taxes became more and more numerous, the Commandant sent along a few troops and summoned the ringleaders to

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appear before him to answer for their conduct. This was the signal for a general scuttle. Several of the plotters fled the country. Pontcallec, the most deeply implicated, wandered about for a long time in disguise but never succeeded in getting out of France. Finally, he was arrested and divulged the names of all his accomplices. A Royal Court of Justice was set up at Nantes and instituted a searching enquiry into every phase of the conspiracy: treason, cabals, enlistment of soldiers, establishment of depots for arms. . . . D'Argenson directed the procedure from behind the scenes and drew up the interrogatories. The Court sentenced four of the conspirators to death, and convicted a hundred more for complicity. Sixteen of the accused, who had managed to get across into Spain, were burned in effigy. Thus ended this abortive attempt at a revolution.

The two years which witnessed the progressive humiliation of the Parlement, also saw the overthrow of the Councils and the return of the system of Louis the Fourteenth. The Conseil de Conscience was the first to go. At the request of the Regent, Cardinal de Noailles, the President, handed in his resignation, and this was made a pretext for dispensing with the services of his colleagues. (September, 1718.) A week later, the Councils of Foreign Affairs, War and the Interior disappeared in the same unceremonious fashion. Out of regard for the Comte de Toulouse, the Council of the Navy was carried on until 1723. The control of Foreign Affairs reverted officially to Dubois, who had long directed them unofficially. The former Secretary of State, Torcy, only retained the comptrollership of the Post Office. On the other hand, La Vrillière and Maurepas both resumed their former portfolios, the one for Public Worship, the other, the King's Household. D'Armenonville remained nominally at the War Office, but he was assigned a deputy in the person of Claud Le Blanc, formally commander of the Flanders coast, and a veteran of the old administration.

Little by little, the displaced officials came back to the positions they had vacated. In June, 1720, d'Argenson, who was at loggerheads with Law, had perforce to resign his seals of office, but a few months later, Law in his turn came to grief and, to wind up the system, the Regent had recourse to some financiers of the old school, the brothers Pâris who professed themselves the exponents of sane and sound finance, as contrasted with these recent wild-cat novelties.

There were four of these Pârises, all of them tall, agreeable, fine-looking men. They hailed from Moirans in the Dauphiny, where

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their father kept an inn at the sign of the Great Saint Francis. How they began life is a mystery. According to some reports, they acted as guides to Catinat's army when on active service in Italy. As a reward, it was said, for their skill and coolness, the contractors-in-chief offered them employment on their regular staff and an interest in the business. This was said to be the beginning of their fortunes. According to other accounts, their position, from the start, was far more brilliant. In 1690, if we are to believe these obliging biographers, the army of the Dauphiny was threatened with a bread-famine. The eldest Pâris, whose name was Antoine, a youth of twenty, rushed away to Lyons and implored the magistrates of that city to let him have their stock of wheat against an undertaking by him to replace it, as soon as the thaw set in, by an equal quantity which the frost was holding up in Burgundy. The Magistrates gave their consent. Six thousand sacks of wheat were sent off in the direction of Grenoble. The Pârises collected three thousand mules in Vivarais, crossed the Alps with them, and so saved the Army from starvation. A few years later, we come across them again, with Vendôme and Villars in Flanders. Men of method, hard workers, fertile in resource, they became the great food-purveyors of the age, indispensable collaborators of statesmen and generals. Were they honest men? As honest as they could be in a calling full of risks, a calling which required immense capital, where bad debts were common and where one deal that turned out well had to pay for many more that went awry.

The Pârises' rise to fame continued without a hitch. Beginning as private traders, they rose to fill important public positions. A legal judgment confirmed the family in the possession of a title formally conferred on one of their ancestors who had served under Créquy. The eldest, Antoine, he of the six thousand sacks, had been *receveur-général* in the Dauphiny since 1711. The Regent subsequently appointed him Lord of the Treasury. The second, Claude, surnamed de la Montagne, had been paymaster of the Flanders forces and *commissaire des guerres*. The youngest, Montmartel, was for twenty-five years to be the official Court Banker. Lastly, the third, Duverney, the great man of the family, was to die a Councillor of State and superintendent of the *Ecole Militaire*. To him it fell to direct the operations necessitated by Law's failure, and, in this capacity, he was destined to remain for more than a year a kind of dictator, with absolute command over money and property.

The situation was one of extraordinary gravity. As in all cases

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of inflation, the System had given an extraordinary fillip to trade. For several months, France believed herself rich, and lived like a millionaire. Luxury trades, theatres, restaurants had been the first to profit by the frenzy. Then, as the quantity of notes was continually increasing, the price of commodities had doubled, trebled, and quadrupled, thus giving the peasantry increased spending power, the means of adding to their holdings and of paying off the mortgages with which their land was encumbered. The State, freed from the incubus of debt, had inaugurated great public works; the Montargis Canal, bridges over the Loire, harbour works at Lorient. But in the long run, these advantages were dearly paid for. Profiting by the fall in paper, debtors repaid their creditors in what amounted to mere tokens. People holding stock at a fixed rate of interest discovered that they were ruined. Holders of notes, shareholders in the Company, in a few weeks lost both notes and shares. Confidence was destroyed. As no one would buy, trade and industry came to a standstill, hands were thrown out of employment and compelled to beg their bread. In terror of dying of hunger, everyone had hung on to whatever little bit of money he had been able to save. The exchequer was empty and, for lack of specie, it was impossible to put any money into circulation. Law is often praised for having been the first to show the governing authorities the infinite potentialities of credit and to initiate the public into those new ideas which were destined to change the face of the economic world: share warrants to bearer, speculation, buying and selling for the account, bank transfers, etc. The fact, however, is that he had left such a terrible impression on the minds of his contemporaries, that, so far from accelerating the advent of the credit system, he retarded it. In Louis the Fifteenth's reign, all that was needed to rout the supporters of a new issuing-bank was to remind them of the picture of that tragic house in which, in December, 1720, they found a man who had hanged himself, a woman stabbed to death and their children with their throats cut, while, in the same room with them, there were half-a-dozen copper sous and two hundred thousand livres in notes.

The task which the commission, directed by Pâris - Duverney, took upon its shoulders, was to bring things back to where they were before the advent of Law. An Order in Council, dated January 26th, 1721, required that all contracts in respect of *rentes*, and all certificates of account, notes, shares, bonds, receipts, etc. - in a word, all documents connected with the system, should be lodged for

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examination, together with full particulars regarding the date and mode of purchase and the price paid. Eight Councillors of State, twenty-five *Maîtres de Requêtes* and two thousand clerks, distributed over fifty-four offices, toiled at the examination of this enormous mass of paper which, nominally, reached the fabulous figure of two and a half billions, or seventeen times the total revenue of the country. Five hundred thousand persons deposited their stock for examination.

The process of checking occupied a year. All the documents, share warrants and notes were destroyed. In exchange for them, the creditors were allotted forty-six million government stock created for the purpose by the State; sixteen million in life annuities at  $4\frac{1}{2}$ , and thirty million, perpetual stock at 2 and  $2\frac{1}{2}$ . The capital of the India Company was reduced by one-half, but, by way of subsidy, it was granted the revenue from tobacco. At the same time, the Comptroller General, Le Pelletier de la Houssaye, persuaded the tax farmers to let him have a few million in advance. This loan enabled him to wait for better days and also to meet the supplementary expenditure occasioned by the outbreak of plague which was ravaging Marseilles and Provence.

In every department the spirit of reaction was at work. At the beginning of the Regency, Philippe had been inclined to favour the Jansenists, for the simple reason that Louis the Fourteenth had persecuted them. Dubois brought him over to the Jesuits. An arrangement was effected between the two parties, with Noailles on the one side, Rohan and Bissy on the other. The Parlement ratified it under threats of pains and penalties if they refused. Orders were given that the Bull condemning the Hundred Propositions was to be accepted in its entirety. It was forbidden to write, utter or promulgate anything of a nature to contradict it. You might have thought yourself back in the days of Madame de Maintenon. But all this fine show of zeal was not disinterested; Dubois was aiming at the purple. He remembered, just in time, that he was not even a priest and that, though he had abbeys enough in his possession to dub himself an abbot, he had never been ordained. A few weeks sufficed to make him sub-deacon, deacon, priest, and archbishop. 'Mightn't they as well baptize him, while they are about it?' people sarcastically enquired. The consecration ceremony took place at le Val-de-Grâce in the presence of a magnificent gathering. It was a scandalous farce, yet Massillon did not disdain to grace it with his presence.

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Dubois had too many enemies to be able to stop at this point in his career. The attacks of which he was the object on all sides only increased his anxiety to obtain the Hat and so to raise himself above the peers as to render his position impregnable. He approached the Pope by the most devious and unusual methods, but, despite the agreement, Clement XI did not rise to the bait. Dubois insisted, urged, threatened and implored. He got the Regent, the Emperor, the King of England, the Roman Princes, the Stuart Pretender all to espouse his cause. Worn down by illness, Clement XI looked at one moment as if he were going to yield. But the very next day he changed his mind. He died shortly afterwards, without having made any definite promise. In all haste, Dubois despatched the Abbé Tencin to Rome. Tencin ingratiated himself with one of the Cardinals who was a likely candidate for the Papacy, to wit, Conti, and, with the vote of the French party, secured his election as Pope under the title of Innocent XII. Having attained his ends, Conti would have liked to go back on his word. But he had been rash enough to sign an agreement. Tencin bluntly reminded him of it and, on July 6th, 1721, Dubois was made a Cardinal.

But, even now, he was not satisfied. He wanted to be Prime Minister like Mazarin, like Richelieu. For a whole year, the Regent was pestered with his importunities. At last he gave way. Weariness? Indolence? Gratitude? A mixture of the three perhaps. Dubois' ambition was taking on a touch of frenzy. He wanted to be a member of the Academy, he had taken over the Post Office from Torcy; he had a very good mind to oust Daguesseau. He tried to get everything into his own hands. He never had work enough, or enough homage or enough sycophants. With his little bloodshot, weasel eyes, he was for ever darting furtive glances round about him, as if to see whether there was any other prey on which to fasten. He could not sleep, he was a martyr to fever, and, sometimes he would be taken with terrible fits of fury that left him exhausted and trembling in every limb. His right-hand man died of apoplexy, he himself was a wreck, wasted by diabetes. People thought he was as good as dead. Not he! They would soon be seeing him on horseback, riding just behind the King at the Spring manoeuvres. And, sure enough, when the day came, there he was, writhing in the saddle, doubled up with pain, white as if he had not a drop of blood in his body, and looking like a corpse. On his return home the doctors discovered that an internal abscess had burst and that his bladder was full of pus. He lived on for another four months,

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fighting furiously against his terrible agony. When, at length, on the urgent representations of the surgeons, he consented to be operated upon, it was too late; gangrene had already set in. For several hours he lay in the throes of death and died on August 10th, 1723, on a day of close and thundery weather. Philippe d'Orléans himself took over the duties of Prime Minister, and no change was made in the government. But Philippe, too, was worn out in mind and body. For some months now he had been getting very stout. He walked heavily, his face was more deeply flushed than ever, his features were flabby, and a roll of fat hung about his neck. After his supper-parties, he would drop off into a long doze. They would prop him up in an easy chair, his head lolling forward, a dull, stupid expression on his face, his tongue thickly coated. At such times, he scarcely knew even his most intimate friends. In quick succession, he had just lost the two beings he loved best in the world: his mother and his daughter. And so he too had come to be occupied with the thoughts of death, and was often heard to say that he hoped his own end would be a swift one.

On December 2nd, 1723, about six o'clock in the evening, he was in his corner room at Versailles, on the ground floor, hard by the Orangerie. It was dusk, and the domestics had already closed the shutters and drawn the curtains. The Prince, gathering up some papers, was about to go upstairs to the King to do some work with him. But ever since morning he had had a sensation of heaviness in the head and a feeling of discomfort in the stomach. He thought a few minutes' relaxation would do him good, and he told his valet, Renaud, to admit the Duchesse de Falaris, who was waiting to see him.

'Come in, Duchesse; I'm feeling rather tired. Come and liven me up with some of your stories.'

The Duchesse came in. She was a little, fair-haired woman; vivacious, gay and brimming over with fun and mischief. Philippe put her in a chair by the mantelpiece and himself sat down in front of the fire and began staring at it with a sort of lost expression as though fascinated by the weird shapes of the leaping flames.

'You will liven me up, a bit,' he said again.

Then, all at once, he exclaimed, 'Do you really believe God exists, and that there is a Heaven and a Hell after this life?'

'Yes, Prince, I certainly do.'

'If so,' he went on, 'you are very unfortunate to be living the life you are.'



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'But,' explained the lady, 'I hope God will be merciful to me.'

The Prince had drawn his chair still closer to the fire. With one finger, he was turning over the pages of a book, a history of dancing which someone had given him as a present.

'Come now, tell me . . .'

Madame de Falari was on the point of beginning one of those stories which she told with such a fund of mischievous charm, when, all of a sudden, Philippe d'Orléans uttered a cry, turned round in his chair, gave a convulsive movement and fell senseless to the ground. The Duchesse started up, shouting for help. At that hour, the ground floor of the Château was deserted, everyone supposing that Philippe was with the King. There was not a soul in the ante-chamber; not a soul in the lower gallery. Mad with terror, the Duchesse rushed out into the Court and encountered nothing save the cold and the darkness. At last, hearing her cries, a footman arrived. Half an hour later they managed to get a surgeon to him. The Prince was still unconscious. They bled him, but it was of no avail; he died at half-past seven.

Already, the Duc de Bourbon was asking the King for the dead man's reversion. Louis' eyes were red and tearful. He spoke no word in reply, but nodded his assent. M. le Duc thanked him and took the oath there and then.

Thus ended an epoch.

## CHAPTER IV

### LONG LIVE THE KING

LOUIS THE FIFTEENTH was born on February 15th, 1710, at eight o'clock in the morning. He was a son of the Duc de Bourgogne, the melancholy-minded pupil of Fénelon, and of Adelaide of Savoy, whose charm and vivacity did so much to enliven the Court of Louis the Fourteenth, when his reign was drawing to a close. His place in the line of succession made it very improbable that he would ever come to the Throne; a Duc de Bretagne was born before him. But, in 1712, his father, his mother and his brother, all died in rapid succession, victims to an epidemic of scarlet fever. Louis the Fifteenth owes his life to the negligence of the doctors, who were so anxious about his brother that they forgot to pay any attention to him. That was his salvation. When his turn came to be bled, the women objected, and it was they who cured him merely by keeping him warm.

The new Dauphin was handed over to the care of a governess, Madame de Ventadour, who had formally been lady-in-waiting to Madame Palatine. She was a woman of riper years, devout and highly respected. She had, it is true, made people's tongues wag a little when she was a girl, but as she grew older, she put on both weight and wisdom. To the little orphan child she was to be, 'Mamma, dear'; 'Kind Mamma'; 'Mamma Ventadour'. She was like a mother dog with a litter, over-tender, always anxious, always in a flutter, and ever watchful lest ill should befall. To begin with, the child was a pale, delicate, fragile little thing. But by taking good care of him, and by means of a little judicious spoiling, she turned him into a healthy, bright, sturdy and confident boy. 'The chief thing is to live,' she wrote, 'and slowly but surely to educate our feelings. . . . We do our lessons together and get a lot of fun out of them. He will have brains enough for anything. The Governor will see to it that I have all I want. I shall have a nice little piece of material to hand him back for him to work on, the sort of material that will handsomely repay the labour spent on it.'

The portraits of 1715 show us the likeness of a delightful child: big, dark eyes, a bright, intelligent expression, long, curly lashes a

delicate complexion, a shapely, red mouth, a small but characteristically Bourbon nose, and, over the whole picture, an air of grace, vivacity, with a hint of roguishness, in marked contrast to the pomp and grandeur of the setting.

As the years went on, the child grew up into a straight slim figured lad. From Versailles, he was taken to Vincennes, and from Vincennes to Paris. He liked the various changes. The great city filled him with amazement. He was taken for drives to the Champs-Élysées, Muette, Saint-Cloud, Meudon, Saint-Germain, the Place Royale and the Château de Madrid. Sightseers came in crowds to watch him at play on the terrace of the Tuileries. From contemporary memoirs, we get weekly bulletins of his state of health: 'The King is wonderfully well. . . . The King is getting stronger every day. . . . Every day the King grows prettier. . . . The King has had a slight stomach-ache. . . . The King has quite recovered. . . . The King shows many signs of cleverness and good sense.'

When he was seven, he was taken from the women and handed over to the men. In accordance with the time-honoured custom, he was undressed and made to walk completely naked past doctors, surgeons, apothecaries, princes, princesses, lords and ladies, who, after patting, sounding and examining him all over, limb by limb, signed a report certifying that he was of the male sex, in no way disfigured, well nourished, healthy and entirely sound in all his members. A fortnight later, on February 15th, 1717, Madame de Ventadour intercepted the Regent as he was making his way to the Council Chamber, and, in the words of the customary formula, said to him,

'Monseigneur, is it your pleasure that I should place the King's person in your hands?'

'It is, Madame.'

Thereupon he went with her into the child's room.

'Monseigneur,' the Duchesse continued, 'here is the charge whom the late King entrusted to me, and whom you left in my hands. I have taken every possible care of him, and I hand him over to you in perfect health.'

'Sire,' said the Regent turning to the King, 'you must never forget the obligations you are under to Madame de Ventadour. You owe your life to the care she took of you when you were very little, and everyone is pleased with the manner in which she has brought you up.'

Then he introduced the Duc du Maine, who was to have charge of

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his education, the Duc de Villeroy, his guardian, and Fleury, the former Bishop of Fréjus, his tutor; and then, addressing his remarks to them, he concluded as follows:

'Gentlemen, this sacred charge you must regard as your very special concern. We trust that you will fulfil the expectations which France entertains of you in regard to the King's education. It is for you to bestow upon him all the care and attention which we are entitled to expect from your zeal and affection for His Majesty.'

Thereupon, Madame de Ventadour embraced the King and made as though to withdraw. But the child would not let her go. He clung to her with his little clenched hands; he hung on to her garments, weeping scalding tears and crying, in a voice broken with sobs, 'Mamma . . . oh, mamma. . . .'

'But come now, Sire,' said the kind Duchesse, 'we must be sensible.'

'But Mamma, I can't be sensible any more, when I have to go away from you.'

The whole of that day he wept without ceasing and kept calling for Mamma Ventadour. At last, there was nothing for it but to go and fetch her. He refused to eat his food unless she were by. Towards evening, however, he grew calmer, and, with his own hand, gave the governess the presents which Villeroy had put ready: a diamond cross, the late Dauphin's ring and several handsome jewels.

The Maréchal de Villeroi was a man of seventy-four. He was a noble old fellow who looked as if he were cut out to play the part of the Prince of Misfortune. Spare, vigorous, magnificent in every way, with an engaging countenance and all the courtliness of the *grand seigneur*, he possessed that gift for conversation and that lofty yet courteous bearing which comes of moving in high society and from habitually exercising the habit of command. Brave, upstanding, a good horseman, attentive to the women, he was rather absurdly proud of his conquests among the fair sex, and, if he had not exactly shone in war, no one had been more readily oblivious of the fact than he. His father had been Guardian to Louis the Fourteenth and he himself a playmate of the Roi Soleil, the companion of his youth, the confidant of all his private affairs. In entrusting his great-grandson to his charge, Louis the Fourteenth had purposely chosen a man of the old-school, trained in the tradition of good manners and endowed with the ability to transmit them.

But it was the future that caused Louis especially grave concern. He foresaw that his death would be the signal for a general upheaval. The ambitions of Philippe d'Orléans caused him no little uneasiness;

the sort of people his nephew had about him, made him still more apprehensive. In case of trouble, who would take care of the orphan child, seeing there were so many who stood to gain by his disappearance? But, at all events, if there was any man on whose loyalty and devotion he could count, that man was Villeroy and that, no doubt, was the prime consideration that decided him in his choice.

The Regent was a better man than Louis the Fourteenth imagined he was. But none the less, Villeroy took the responsibilities of his office very seriously. Bridling with importance, preoccupied with mysterious cares, he made a point of keeping the bread and butter which Louis the Fifteenth was destined to consume, strictly under lock and key. He also kept his handkerchiefs in a triple-locked safe. From morning till night, he played, for the delectation of the Court and of himself, the comedy of the Guardian Angel on the constant look-out for secret poisoners. An excellent professor of deportment, he imparted to his pupil that regal air, that majestic bearing which made him the most distinguished-looking man in the Kingdom. But it was there that his art stopped short. He overwhelmed the child with parades, audiences, reviews, oath-taking ceremonies, marches-past, luncheons and all manner of wearisome and exacting functions. He expected this child of seven to have the majestic demeanour and physical endurance possessed by Louis the Fourteenth at sixty. He would have been only too pleased to put him on the boards and make him act. In 1720, he made him dance a ballet in public. A stage was arranged in the Grande Salle des Machines at the Tuileries. Admission was by invitation. There were five performances in a fortnight. The company was made up of young noblemen and professional opera dancers. Louis the Fifteenth performed two solo dances. Villeroy beamed with delight. You might have taken him for a man giving a public display of some doll he had invented.

The Turkish Ambassador, Mehemet Effendi, who came to Paris that year, has left a charming account of his visit and, in particular, of the audience granted him by Louis the Fifteenth, assisted by the inevitable Maréchal.

‘The King,’ he writes, ‘took great delight in examining our dresses and our daggers, one after another.’

‘“What think you of my King’s beauty?” asked the Maréchal.’

‘“God be praised for it,” I answered, “and may He preserve him from all ill.”’

‘“He is only just eleven years and four months” he added. “Isn’t

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his figure beautifully proportioned? And, mark you, this is his own hair."

"So saying, he made the King turn round, and I contemplated his hyacinthine locks, and gently stroked them. They were like meshes of golden thread, perfectly even, and they reached right down to his waist.

"His carriage," his Guardian went on, "is also very fine." Then, turning to the King, he added, "Come, walk about a little and let us see how you move."

"The King, strutting with the majesty of a partridge, walked to the middle of the room and back again.

"Walk a little faster," said the Guardian, "just let us see how light you are on your feet."

"Whereupon the King began to run as fast as he could. The Maréchal then asked me whether I did not think he was a nice child. By way of answer I exclaimed,

"May Almighty God who has created so fair a creature, bestow His blessing upon him."

Brought up like this Louis the Fifteenth would have become a mere mannequin, an animated doll, a grown-up child, a withered coxcomb. But he was full of life, and his nature resisted such malign influences. He still remained a healthily boisterous lad, with all the faults and shortcomings of his age.

The life of a child is one of innocent frolic, of laughter, of tearful interludes, of racing and tearing about from dawn till dusk. There is something especially moving about the life of an orphan, something that touches the heart. How comes it then that the historians of the period are always peering down over Louis the Fifteenth, with bitterness in their hearts, full of malice, hatred and all uncharitableness, like a pack of crabbed ushers trying to find some excuse for inflicting a punishment. Sourly and vindictively they draw up the inventory of his misdemeanours: after a long ceremony, we are told, he was relieved at being able to give up playing the King, and played at being a cook instead. Fancy that, at six! Oh, crime unpardonable! And when he was seven, he actually jumped about and turned somersaults on his bed! When he was seven and a half he was inattentive at Mass, and hid behind a curtain to avoid giving an audience to an ambassador. What an enormity! But to cap everything, he asked the Nuncio to say over the names of all the Popes, and seeing that the Nuncio was in a fix, he triumphantly rattled off the complete list of all the kings of France. That is pretty

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well everything. Ah, no! Pardon me. He once said something rude to a bishop.

When he was about the age of ten, he became quick-tempered and tyrannical. He would stamp on the ground with his foot, strike his companions and tear at the lace ruffles of his courtiers. But these things were merely a passing phase, moral growing-pains as it were, and soon went off. In some of these little outbursts of temper he used to come off second-best. In the guise of Latin exercises, his tutor made him write down some humiliating confessions, and phrases of regret. 'Although the King has often promised that he would moderate his wrath, he is still so much dominated by his passions that he is led to strike even those he loves.' Once, when he had slapped the face of the Chevalier de Pezé, who was his opponent in a game of cards, he was punished for several days and made to apologize to that gentleman. On another occasion, he behaved himself in such a manner as to earn public rebuke from the Duc de Noailles. . . . After a few months his temper improved, and things went on normally again.

The young King has also been portrayed as a melancholy, lackadaisical creature, prematurely *blasé* and already sick of the things of this world. Pure imagination! Everybody who knew him intimately, absolutely denies it. For the first half of the year 1722, a young page, the Marquis de Calvière, has left us a very detailed record of Louis the Fifteenth's daily doings. It all consists of trips to various places, open-air sports, fishing for cray-fish, flying kites, playing ball-games, hop-scotch and so on. When it was fine, they played soldiers. When it was wet, they would dress up, eat chocolate, look at old magazines, take their toys to pieces. The King was boisterous, but easy enough to manage. He was fond of making little presents to his companions – an Easter egg, a watch, a catechism-book, a medal, a whip, a set of billiard balls, a cup-and-ball, some sweetmeats. One day he was downcast. What was it? Neurasthenia? No, he only had toothache and dared not say so for fear of the dentist.

As a matter of fact, Villeroy, by thus endeavouring to push the boy into the public eye, gave him a dread of crowds and of people he did not know, a dread that lasted throughout his life. The sound of cheering crowds, the movement of large masses of people, scared him; it made him nervous to be in public. He would not open his mouth and his manner became like ice. He had to make no small effort to say what he had been told to say. People who saw him at

such times, saw a kind of frozen dummy. 'He'll never have any feelings!' they would say. But Barbier, who saw him going about and following his own devices at Versailles, said that he was quite a different boy, and that, whatever people might say to the contrary, there was nothing morose, listless or stupid about him then.

This sort of double nature was the most remarkable trait in his character and remained so all his life long. There was a hidden Louis the Fifteenth, known only to his intimate friends, a Louis simple, gracious, good-natured, tender, light-hearted, and witty. Occasionally, indeed, he was a little puerile, finding amusement in the merest trifles. On the other hand, and by way of contrast, there was the public Louis the Fifteenth, majestic, awe-inspiring, with grand manners, but out of his element, taciturn, close, liable to burst out with something totally unexpected, some wry jest or other that people would interpret as cynicism or ill nature.

The man who exerted the greatest influence over him was undoubtedly Fleury, his tutor. Fleury's father had been a tax-gatherer at Lodève and he had put his son into the Church as a measure of economy, with a view to lightening the family budget. But the Church was able to furnish humble folk with the means of making their mark. Fleury was endowed with good manners, dignity and piety. Through the influence of Cardinal de Bonzi, he became chaplain to Queen Maria Theresa; and then Bishop of Fréjus, the dullest and the least remunerative diocese in the country. The new prelate cared neither for money nor display. But, away down there, nine hundred miles away from Versailles, he did not have the liveliest of times. There are some letters of his extant which are signed André-Hercule, Bishop of Fréjus, by the Wrath of God. He was there for fifteen years. When, however, we come to sum it up, that exile made his fortune. When Louis the Fourteenth wanted to find a tutor for his great-grandson, he bethought him of this gentle, modest, well-mannered prelate, who had kept aloof from plots and intrigues and would come back to Court unhampered by ties of any such nature. Fleury had not an enemy, even the Jesuits looked with favour upon him and gave him a helping hand.

He put implicit trust in his pupil, conciliated his affections and ensured his obedience. The *fortiter in re* was not part of his equipment, but beneath a gentle, almost caressing exterior, he was authoritative, persevering, tenacious. He never appeared to be issuing orders, and his counsels were followed as though they were commands. He collected a little group of teachers about him,



meritorious and learned men, who divided the work between them – the assistant-tutor Vittement; the historians, Fleury and Alary; the geographer, Guillaume Delisle; the mathematician, Chevalier. When occasion arose, he would ask for the co-operation of the professors of the Lycée Louis-le-Grand, the foremost teachers of the day. The King worked in the mornings and evenings. Every day there were lessons in writing, Latin and history. Three times a week, geography, astronomy, drawing, mathematics and natural science occupied the pupil's attention. In 1718, a complete printing plant was erected in the lesser apartments under the direction of Jacques Collombat, and Louis the Fifteenth was instructed in the art of typography. He set up and printed off posters and pamphlets in which the precepts it was desired to engrave on his memory were repeated *ad nauseam*. Then he began, and brought to a satisfactory conclusion, a still more ambitious task, a book of seventy-two pages showing the course of the principal waterways and rivers of Europe, a *résumé* of the lessons of Guillaume Delisle. Later on, military science was included in the programme under Lieutenant-General de Puysegur and Herfmann, the engineer. Thus, lessons on the blackboard were supplemented by demonstrations and outdoor manoeuvres. In 1722, the Musketeers and the King's Own Regiment afforded Louis the Fifteenth the spectacle of garrison warfare, in which he took part, without missing a day, for a month. Louis the Fifteenth was anything but an ignoramus. He early acquired a taste for accuracy and precision. He liked to have his papers in first-rate order, with files and indexes. All his life he took an interest in geography, and his library contained a magnificent collection of atlases. He wrote copiously and easily, in a style that was abrupt, but rapid and to the point.

What was the inspiring motive that underlay the system of the King's education, the details of which, they say, were sanctioned by the Pope? Was it mere sycophancy, unadulterated toadyism? It is often said to have been so, but the documents give such statements the lie. In the Bibliothèque Nationale are extant some hundreds of Latin compositions written by Louis the Fifteenth between the ages of seven and thirteen. Some are taken from the Scriptures, some from ancient history – many have reference to the life of Saint Louis, who was constantly held up to him as a model. No sermons. A few prayers. Examples, brief narratives which always revolved about the same ideas, illustrating them in numberless different ways and impressing on the child's mind the ideal of the

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Royal State, namely, a Prince attentive to his duties, easy of access, devout but not bigoted, sober, just, continent, liberal, with lofty aims, and shunning all manner of mockery:

'If kings but knew all that God requires of them, they would tremble every day of their lives.'

'There is nothing greater than a good and diligent king, and nothing more contemptible than a cowardly and slothful one.'

'It is in the power of kings to make themselves beloved, and the fault is theirs when they are hated and ill-spoken of.'

'He that is truly royal should do good without expecting gratitude.'

'A country in which confusion prevails is a slur on the royal state.'

'There is no stronger bulwark for a king than the love and affection of his subjects.'

'A king's will should be regulated by the claims of justice.'

'There is never any shame in confessing one's error, when one has done amiss; and nothing is more glorious than to have the courage to avow oneself in the wrong.'

'By what means does one preserve a kingdom intact? By not thinking how to add to it.'

'Whoso is born to wear a crown must know that a tranquil life spent in pleasure and repose is not for him, but days full of toil, and compassed about by many dangers.'

'Well did Saint Louis know that he was the Father of his People and that God had vouchsafed him the sovereign power only that he might shield his subjects from ill, and make them happy.'

'The King and his people are bound together by ties of mutual obligation. The people undertake to render to their king respect, obedience, succour, service, and to speak that which is true. The King promises his people vigilance, protection, peace, justice, and the maintenance of an equable and unclouded disposition.'

'When Saint Louis was at home and withdrawn from the public gaze, he observed great simplicity in all things, and especially in dress. But when occasion and the honour of the kingdom demanded that he should appear in state, he surpassed all others in magnificence.'

'No prince was ever more obedient to the Holy See than Louis, albeit carefully seeing to it that the prerogatives of the Crown remained unimpaired. He also provided that the liberties of the Gallican Church should suffer no injury, and he would not permit that they should be encroached upon by the officers of the Court of

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Rome. His deep piety in no way compromised his courage, nor dimmed the majesty of the empire which it was his constant care to defend, and which he preserved unblemished to the end.'

All these things were intermingled with acts of repentance, confessions, promises, and prayers both touching and childlike.

'I will never use the power which the royal state confers upon me, save for the purpose of doing good, since well I know that it was for that end alone that God established it.'

'I promise that I will never listen to unseemly discourse, for evil communications corrupt good manners.'

'O my very dear tutor, exhort me always to render myself worthy of my ancestors and especially of Saint Louis. O all you to whom my upbringing has been confided, exhort me always, throughout my life, to do those things which are brave and of good report.'

'I confess that hitherto I have not made use of all my powers of mind to learn and to put into practice those things which are best and most honourable; but I hope that hereafter I shall use them to such good purpose that those who truly hold me in their hearts will greatly rejoice thereat.'

'O Lord, who hast done all things well, who madest the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak, grant that, deaf though I am, I too may hear, not the voice of flattering falsehood to which it will grieve me to have harkened, but the voice of very truth which giveth strength, for by inclining my ear thereto, I shall become a good king and like unto Saint Louis.'

With a tone of greater tenderness, more reminiscent of Fénelon, we have there the same spirit as that which inspired Massillon's *petit Carême*. And those ten discourses on the duties of the great also end in a panegyric of Saint Louis, 'who thought that a life of innocence was not sufficient for a sovereign, and that to live as a saint, he must needs live also as a king.'

When Louis the Fifteenth drew near his legal majority – that is to say, when he was about to complete his thirteenth year – the purely scholastic exercises were curtailed and replaced by an elementary course of political instruction: general organization of the Kingdom, the Army, the Executive, Foreign Affairs, Finance. The lessons were drawn up, under the superintendence of Cardinal Dubois, by eminent specialists in the several departments of instruction: Briquet, chief secretary at the War Office; Le Dran, head of the Foreign Office executive; and Fagon and d'Ormesson, superintendents of finance.

Every day a short passage was read out to the King. This took about ten minutes. Then the King would ask questions, and the Cardinal would reply. Finally, the Regent would sum up all that had been said, add a few comments and explanations of his own, and wind up the proceedings. The whole affair lasted as a rule from an hour and a half to two hours.

Some of these memoranda have come down to us. The one which concerns the revenue is copious, accurate and intelligent. It opens with this dictum: 'The King can only be rich in proportion as his subjects are rich.' In the section dealing with taxation, the poll-tax is condemned as being inequitably distributed, while the real-property tax is extolled, inasmuch as it varies according to the produce of the soil. No lawful grounds are recognized for the fiscal privileges enjoyed by the Church. 'The exemption of ecclesiastics from taxation had its origin in the poverty of the clergy who had no revenue save the free-will offerings of the faithful. When the clergy grew rich, they still remained in the enjoyment of their immunity.' Then, six pages farther on, apropos of the tax on the nobility, it is recommended that a rate should be imposed which should be strictly proportionate to the income of each particular person assessed to taxation. The teaching is bold and makes no attempt to evade difficulties. It was a teaching that Louis the Fifteenth did not forget, for the germ of all his financial policy is contained in those few sentences.

Both the Regent and Dubois were men of exceptional intelligence. Quite apart from any other consideration, their own interests made it important for them to earn the gratitude of the King. Now, Louis the Fifteenth was no fool. He was at this time a thoughtful youth who knew how to use his ears and eyes with profit and whose silences were beginning to be a little disconcerting. The most expeditious way to his heart was through his head. There is no doubt that an attempt had been made to blacken the Regent in his eyes. Nevertheless, he loved with all his heart and soul that handsome uncle of his, who was so affectionate and kind to him, whose deference had so much grandeur in it, and whose advice was fraught with disarming fascination. And, as a matter of fact Philippe, in his dealings with the King, always showed him the tenderest regard. In the child's company, the *blasé* man of the world refreshed his tarnished soul and for the moment forgot his scepticism. He rediscovered himself as a man of duty. Is this a flattering portrayal? A paradox? Not in the least. To bring the

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truth of it home to us, it is enough to recall what the boy-King was to France at that time. No one was ever more deeply beloved. And the proofs of that love abound.

On July 31st, 1721, Louis the Fifteenth was taken ill during Mass. It was the feast of Saint Germain l'Auxerrois. The Church was thronged and the heat was stifling. Towards night he became feverish, and next day his temperature rose so high that twice they were obliged to have recourse to bleeding. The day after, there was no improvement. At last, however, on the third day, the treatment began to have some effect. But for forty-eight hours Paris was in dread lest it might prove to be smallpox. When it became certain that he was going to recover there was a tremendous outburst of rejoicing. The gossip Barbier gives a good account of what took place. His staccato notes convey some idea of the behaviour of the cheering, jostling crowds. On August 4th, Parlement led off with a *Te Deum* at the Sainte Chapelle. In the afternoon, Maréchal de Villeroy proceeded in great state to Saint Geneviève. At night, 'great rejoicings and great gatherings all over Paris. All night long, bonfires, illuminations in every window, tables out in the street, dancing and shouting "Long Live the King." It was enough to deafen you. On the 5th deputations to the Louvre headed by the market-women, followed, hard upon, by the coal-heavers with their cockades and drums. Everyone brought a present. The women of the fish market a sturgeon eight feet long; the butchers an ox and a sheep. At night, illuminations, fireworks, dancing. At six o'clock the *Te Deum* at Notre-Dame in the presence of the Regent, the Princes and the legal luminaries in their red robes. The Maréchal and Madame de Ventadour were cheered to the echo as they came and went. Never, in the daytime, were there such crowds in the streets of Paris, and they kept it up until three in the morning, with extraordinary scenes of uproarious joy. There were groups with palm branches and drums; there were others with violins. Old folk never remembered to have seen such a sight or heard such an uproar. It beggars description. All that week, dancing went on with illuminations, *gratis* performances at the Opera and the Comédie Française.' On Sunday the 17th, the first time since his illness that he had been out, the King attended service at Notre-Dame. 'The people,' writes another eye witness, 'gave fresh expression to their joy and it is impossible to convey an idea of their transports of delight.' On the 20th, there was a military Mass and a review in the Plaine des Sablons; on the 22nd, High Mass at Sainte

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Geneviève's; on the 25th, the feast of Saint Louis, there was a concert at the Tuileries and a display of fireworks. 'Never was anyone's restoration to health celebrated on such a scale. And, incidentally, it cost a deal of money.'

Similar scenes were enacted the following year, on the occasion of the coronation, which was celebrated amid scenes of unprecedented magnificence. Louis the Fifteenth shone with radiance, with the bloom of youth, full of grace and beauty. He passed along in triumph amid glittering diamonds and gorgeous flowers, amid the shouting and the incense. He might have been taken for the living symbol of France re-born. From beginning to end, his progress was one tumultuous manifestation of his people's love. On his return from Rheims all Paris went forth to greet their King at Villers-Cotterets. There was dancing and music, a fair, theatricals, illuminations, and, to crown it all, a gigantic buffet where everyone could help himself according to his tastes and needs. Three thousand tables had been made ready, with a hundred and fifteen thousand glasses and fifty thousand plates full of fruit or cakes. Eighty thousand bottles of champagne were drunk.

After these splendours, the coming-of-age celebrations were rather a tame affair, rather an anti-climax, consisting as they did merely of a brief, colourless ceremony in the Parlement (February, 1723). Louis the Fifteenth was very scared. In reply to the Regent's harangue, he merely mumbled a few words that were scarcely audible, and almost immediately withdrew. Though he had now attained his majority, he had the good sense not to take the reins into his own hands, but to leave the government of the country to his uncle. Nevertheless, a change did take place in him about this time. It was remarked that he used such expressions as 'I wish' more often than before, and also that he kept more to himself. Another thing was that his horror of crowds increased. Not infrequently he would leave his companions, and go apart and read in solitude. Ever since June, 1722, when the Court returned to Versailles, he had been occupying his great-grandfather's quarters. But he was not precisely at home in those vast, comfortless and chilly apartments. He therefore had a little library fitted up, looking out on to the Court, and here he would immure himself in silent loneliness. For a twelvemonth now he had been feeling that he was a man. These were the trying months of adolescence, with its languors, its restlessness, its outbursts of emotion. No flirtations however; no adventures. Louis the Fifteenth was not yet sensible of the

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feminine lure. He had just been affianced to one of the Infantas, a child of five, a pink and white midget, whose arrival he had beheld with a species of disgust, and who was brought up beside him without his so much as flinging her a regard. Nevertheless, she was a delicious little thing, full of life and always in a good humour. She looked on her tall fiancé with touching admiration. But she was a doll, a mere plaything. The marriage was to be consummated in ten years . . . ten years! Louis the Fifteenth would rise betimes, go out hunting, put in some hard riding and tire himself out.

He was too young as yet to govern his household himself. The Court had reformed itself, but none of those at the head of it observed any of the rules of seemliness and order. They lived, in fact, in open debauchery. In July, a terrific scandal broke out. The Villeroy family were mixed up with it; the Duchesse de Retz and the Marquise d'Alincourt, her grand-daughter, the Marquis d'Alincourt her grandson, and in addition, the Duc de Boufflers, the Comte de Ligny, the Marquis de Meuse and the Marquis de Rambure. The women had their lovers. The men consoled themselves in their sylvan retreats. With the exception of Retz, all these young people were under twenty. Every day they were in communication with the King, and it was feared he might be spattered with their filth. Villeroy himself demanded that the whole crowd should be sent packing. They were scattered in various directions, with no other society than that of their wives. But great care was taken not to let Louis the Fifteenth know the nature of their misdeeds. As, however, he became inquisitive, he was told that they had ripped up the palings in the park. *Arracheurs de Palissades!* the nickname stuck to them. The incident displayed at once the sincerity and the blindness of the King's Guardian. He had not hesitated to come down on his own kith and kin, but it had taken a glaring scandal to open the old man's eyes to what was going on. Moreover, he was beginning to relapse into his dotage. The Regent was sick of his crotchety ways, exasperated with his pretentiousness and his excess of zeal. It was a good opportunity to get rid of him. In connection with some vague dispute about etiquette, a *lettre de cachet* sent him back to live on his estate and he was forbidden to re-appear at Court. Louis the Fifteenth wept the whole of one night. But the Regent was inexorable. The Guardian appointed in his stead was the Duc de Charost, a religious and upright man.

For some months Versailles became virtuous. The Regent did not dare to bring his mistress there any more, and the King himself

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dismissed one of his valets who had been rash enough to invite his innamorata to supper at the Château. But in 1724, there was a fresh sensation. The first Gentleman of the Bed Chamber at that time was the little Duc de la Tremoille, a very debonair young man, of agreeable appearance, considerable wit but with tastes that would have been appropriate in a young girl. He spent his days eating lollipops, doing embroidery and weaving tapestry. There was some anxiety lest he should pass on these accomplishments to the King. His guardian, the Prince de Talmont, thought it prudent to get him out of the way. Of course there had to be some sort of a pretext. He chose the best one possible, to wit, marriage. Louis the Fifteenth suffered La Tremoille to go without a word. It is important to mention these stories because, ever since Michelet's time, they have afforded sustenance for calumny to partisan historians, but so far as Louis the Fifteenth was concerned, they are of such small importance that otherwise they would not have been worth mentioning. Nevertheless, this great fellow, as he now was, could hardly be expected to hang about all alone until the Infanta was old enough to wed. Nor was it to be expected that they would always be able to keep an effective eye upon him. If they were too strict, there was a risk of going back to the bad old days of favourites. An open and permanent *liaison* with a lady of the Court would have created an undoubted scandal and have excited endless intrigues. So would a series of transient affairs. Then again, the King's health was beginning to give rise to some anxiety. He did too much hard riding, and sometimes, tired out after a day's hunting, he had suffered from fits of exhaustion and attacks of fever. What would happen if he were to die without an heir? At the same time that they had betrothed him to the Infanta, they had wedded a daughter of the Regent to Don Luis, Prince of the Asturias. The latter had just died after reigning one year, and Philip the Fifth, who had abdicated in his favour, was about to resume the Crown. The plan conceived by the Duc d'Orléans was falling through, or rather, to put it more correctly, Spain was the only one whom it was going to benefit. Would they, then, have to send the Infanta home, and marry the King to another princess? What would be the effect of such an affront in Madrid?

All these questions presented themselves to the Duc de Bourbon as soon as he became Prime Minister. They were all the more urgent in his eyes as, in the absence of a Dauphin, the Crown would, if anything untoward should happen, revert to the Regent's son. He



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was an insignificant young man, wholly wrapped up in good works and devotional exercises, but between the two branches of Orléans and Condé, there was an obstinate barrier of hatred which the two dowager Duchesses, both of them daughters of Louis the Fourteenth and Madame de Montespan, both equally arrogant and equally insolent, did their utmost to maintain.

M. le Duc was only thirty-one. He was plain of feature and he squinted. He was perched high up on a pair of bony legs, and was round shouldered, owl-eyed and altogether rather forbidding in appearance. He was reputed to be very stupid, but at all events he had managed to get away with the enormous profits he had made when Law and his system were in full swing. He lived in great style and gave elaborate hunting parties and fêtes at Chantilly. Madame de Prie was pretty, intelligent, witty and ambitious. She was the daughter of a business man, Berthelot de Plencuf, and she persuaded M. le Duc to put complete confidence in Pâris-Duverney who, with the vague title of *Secrétaire des Commandements*, had all the ministers under his thumb. With regard to the marriage question, Madame de Prie thoroughly concurred with her lover's ideas. A secret meeting took place to which Fleury and the Maréchal de Villars were invited. All were agreed that the Infanta would have to be sent home again. Villars summed up the sentiments of the others when he said, 'God, for the comfort of us French people has granted us so sturdy a King that He might have given us a Dauphin a good year ago. He ought therefore for his own peace, and the peace of his people, to marry to-day rather than to-morrow.'

Still, there were hesitations. But Louis the Fifteenth fell sick. Twenty times during the day M. le Duc went to visit him in the sick-room. At night, suddenly appearing in his night-cap and dressing-gown, he would anxiously question the domestic on duty, inquiring if the King had slept, if he had drunk anything, if he was feverish. Then he would repair to the *Œil de Bœuf*, gesticulating and talking to himself, muttering, 'What would happen to me? I should never get over it. If he gets through this, we must find a wife for him.'

As soon as Louis the Fifteenth was on his legs again, they hastened matters on. Maréchal de Tesse, the Ambassador at Madrid, was too much hand-in-glove with Philip the Fifth to be entrusted with so disagreeable a mission as that of announcing the rupture. He was superseded by Abbé de Livry, the French envoy at Lisbon. On the appointed day, President Hénault relates, the Abbé went tremblingly

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into Philip the Fifth's study, and presented his master's letter to the King. Philip read it through without a word, and when he arrived at the concluding formula, he brought down his fist with such violence upon the table, as he shouted 'Ah, the traitors!' that the Queen came hurrying in to find out what was amiss.

'There, Madame, read that!' he thundered.

The Queen read the letter, and handing it back to him, remarked with great coolness, 'Well, we must send someone to take charge of the Infanta.'

The poor little thing was already on the way. They had managed to keep her in the dark as to the why and wherefore of her departure. She thought her parents wanted to see her, and that she would soon be back at Versailles again. The Spaniards welcomed her with transports of delight, and flung little effigies of Louis the Fifteenth into the flames. Fortunately, things did not go much farther than that.

Now, the business was to find another bride. Morville, Secretary for Foreign Affairs, had a list drawn up of all the eligible princesses, with full details regarding their ages, looks, health and dispositions. There were ninety-nine of them altogether. But the majority were not suitable at all, and a preliminary investigation of the list weeded out eighty-two of them. The remaining possibles included:

The two sisters of M. le Duc; but such an alliance would have involved a disproportionate advancement of one branch of the Princes of the Blood at the expense of the other.

The daughter of the Duc de Lorraine – but she was an Orléans on her mother's side, and the same objection applied to her.

The future Tsarina Elisabeth of Russia – but her father was an inebriate and she herself was said to be unbalanced.

As for M. le Duc, he seems to have been rather favourably disposed towards Anne, the eldest daughter of the Prince of Wales. A portrait of Louis the Fifteenth, which had been sent to London, had caused something of a sensation there. But the Princess was a Lutheran and it was impossible for her to become a convert because it was only owing to their heretical opinions that the Hanoverians had been able to oust the Stuarts from the English throne.

In the end they were obliged to fall back on the Princess Maria Leczinska, daughter of Stanislas, the dethroned King of Poland. The match was not an excessively brilliant one. Stanislas had certainly worn an illustrious crown, but he had been dispossessed of it by the Elector of Saxony, Augustus II. For the moment, he was living on a very modest scale, in quite a humble sort of house in Wissemburg.

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His family estate having been confiscated, he could no longer count on any financial assistance from Warsaw. Queen Catherine's jewels were in pawn to some Frankfort money-lenders. All the family had to live on was a pension, paid at very irregular intervals, by the French Government. They made no attempt to hide their poverty. The King's old comrades in arms had all departed beyond the veil, one after another. The only ones who remained were a couple of Polish priests, an old baron whom they called the Grand Marshal of the Court, and three other members of the nobility, who shared the titles of Chamberlain and Secretary – their sole emoluments. Now and again there was a caller or two, Cardinal de Rohan, the Bishop of Strasburg, Maréchal du Bourg, Commandant of the same town. To fill up the remaining days – well, there was the Queen's bad temper, church-going, books and money troubles.

But there was this to be said; Stanislas had brought up his daughter well. Believing her destined to pass her days in comparative obscurity, he had trained her in a manner which he thought would enable her to find a consolation and a charm in the mediocrity of her station: sound knowledge, religion, a love of home and a taste for reading – such were her accomplishments. Maria was twenty-one, just six years older than Louis the Fifteenth. You would not have called her excessively good-looking, but she was attractive and had a good figure, expressive eyes and a lovely complexion. Though she was little accustomed to Society, she knew how to bear herself with grace in public, and how to endure with dignity the curiosity of the crowd. She danced, sang and played the harpsichord, all with natural taste and without troubling very much about practising. She was also said to be very kind hearted, charitable and cheerful. At a Council held on March 31st, 1735, the Duc de Bourbon submitted to the King a detailed list of the various eligible princesses, and summed up strongly in favour of Maria. Louis the Fifteenth asked Fleury what he thought, and then consented. That same evening, a messenger set out for Wissemburg.

'Not for a moment,' writes M. de Nolhac, 'did Marie hesitate to accept the favour which heaven had proffered her and which promised such a deal of comfort to those she loved. Her girlish heart was already lost to the handsome young King with whose features prints and engravings had made her familiar; and often had she prayed that happiness might be his, in return for the kindnesses showered upon her kinsfolk.' As for Stanislas, he nearly choked for joy. Nevertheless, this happy turn of fortune did not bereave him

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of his business sense. Rich in his newly-discovered credit, he immediately raised a loan of thirteen thousand pounds from the Governor of Strasburg and sent off a messenger to recover his wife's jewels from the clutches of the Jews of Frankfort.

On Sunday, May 27th, King Louis the Fifteenth publicly announced his forthcoming marriage. 'Gentlemen,' said he, 'I am marrying the Princess of Poland. This Princess, who was born on June 23rd, 1703, is the only daughter of Stanislas Leczinski, Count of Lesno, heretofore staroste of Adelnau, Palatine of Posnania, who was elected King of Poland in July, 1704, and of Catherine Opalinska, daughter of the Castellan of Posnania. Both are coming to take up their residence at the Château of Saint Germain-en-Laye, together with the mother of King Stanislas, Anna Jablanoruska, who, in her second marriage, wedded Count de Lesno, General-in-Chief of the Kingdom.' When the King had ceased, the Duc de Gesvres, First Gentleman of the Bedchamber, made his way into the *Œil de Bœuf* and publicly proclaimed the same tidings, announcing the great and decisive news to all the purveyors of Court gossip and political sensations.

At once a chorus of disapproval rose up to the heavens. 'The Court,' says Marais, 'was as sad as if someone had said the King had just had an attack of apoplexy. The congratulations demanded by Court etiquette were chilly and perfunctory. It was given out that Maria was hideous, that she was web-footed, that she was an epileptic, and that she suffered from the King's Evil. It was also put abroad that the marriage was all the doing of that Madame de Prie, and that the favourite had wanted to get hold of someone ugly in order to give her own pre-eminence the greater emphasis. There was a parody of the *Ecole des Femmes* in which the Marquise was supposed to say to the Queen

Notre roi vous épouse et, cent fois la journée  
Vous devez bénir l'heure de votre destinée.  
Contemplez la bassesse où vous avez été  
Et du prince qui m'aime admirez la bonté.  
Qui de l'état obscur de simple demoiselle  
Sur le trône des lys par mon choix vous appelle . . .

The Orléans family went about inveighing against the mésalliance and, as there was nothing in the match to flatter the national pride, the lower orders were still more hostile than their betters. Popular songs referred to the affair, every one of them insultingly:

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On dit qu'elle est hideuse,  
Mais cela ne fait rien,  
Car elle est vertueuse,  
Et très fille de bien.

The only one who was pleased was Louis the Fifteenth. He was in the seventh heaven.

Early in July, Stanislas and his people came and settled themselves at Strasburg, where they were welcomed with great ceremony by the magistrates, the Cardinal and the clergy. On August 15th, the Duc d'Orléans, the first Prince of the Blood, espoused Maria as proxy, and two days afterwards the Queen began her journey. The carriages and baggage-wagons of the Duc d'Orléans went on ahead in order to receive Her Majesty in the various places in which she might be disposed to halt. Then came rolling along the carriages of the Medical Faculty and the Duc de Noailles, followed by pages on horseback. Finally came the Queen's coach, the senior officers on horseback, the bodyguard, the hundred Switzers, the carriages of the Court with the ladies-in-waiting and the ladies of the palace. Then followed a long train of carts and wagons. The immense procession was over three miles in length. It progressed slowly along the sunken roads. For three months it had been raining incessantly. Everywhere the crops were down, and the peasants were bewailing their unhappy lot. In every village she passed through, Maria gave away alms.

They put up for a couple of days in Metz. The rain had ceased and Maria entered the town by torchlight. There was a *Te Deum* at the Cathedral, illuminations, fireworks, a luncheon in the Frascati Gardens, an official reception, a concert and a cavalcade. The Jewish Community were received in audience after the canonesses of Remiremont. The Rabbi compared Her Majesty to the Queen of Sheba and said she combined the graces of Esther with the magnanimity of Judith. Then they continued their journey via Verdun, Clermont, Sainte-Menehoulde, Chalons, Sézanne and Provins. One day the Doctors' carriage upset in a ditch. On another occasion, the Duc d'Antin tumbled down in the mud. In Champagne, the carriages foundered in a quagmire. By main force they dragged the Queen out and put her in a lighter conveyance. The Duchesses followed on foot, in their Court dresses, attired for the evening reception, smothered with diamonds and mud. These incidents did not damp either the good humour or the enthusiasm of the

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party. Whenever the weather cleared a little, out would come bands of musicians and deputations, with banners, to shower compliments and gifts upon the Queen. The townsfolk of Rheims sallied forth in crowds and brought immense baskets filled with grapes, preserves and bottles of wine. On September 3rd, they passed the night at Montereau. On the 4th, a messenger announced that the King was arriving with the Court and that he would await the Queen at four o'clock in the afternoon on the plateau at Froidefontaine.

Eager crowds had hastened to the spot from fifty miles around and swarmed in their thousands over the fields. The ground where the reception was to take place had been covered with a carpet and everywhere fiddlers were fiddling. The rain had relented, the weather was fine and mild. Clad in a dress of silver brocade, Maria advanced towards the King and cast herself at his feet. Her joy had given her a glow of beauty. Scarcely had she bent her knee, when Louis the Fifteenth raised her, clasped her in his arms, eagerly imprinted a kiss on each cheek, and, in moving tones, told her how overjoyed he was to see her and to bid her welcome. After some presentations had taken place, the King and Queen entered their carriage together and drove off to the sound of drums and trumpets.

The wedding was solemnised next day at Fontainebleau. It took three hours to robe the Queen. She wore a gown of violet velvet edged with ermine and besprinkled with golden fleurs-de-lis, and the front of it was covered with precious gems. The King donned a coat of gold brocade, with a white-plumed hat, the brim of which was caught up with an enormous diamond. Contemporary records give the details of the ceremony: the procession of the Knights of the Holy Ghost, the splendid decorations of the Chapel, the glitter of jewels and the shimmer of silk, the music, the Mass celebrated by Cardinal de Rohan, the thrill that run through all present as the nuptial benediction was bestowed, the great banquet, the performance by the players of the Comédie Française who enacted scenes from Molière. The illuminations at night proved a failure, because it blew so hard that the wind put the lamps out. The King took advantage of it to curtail the remaining ceremonies and to retire the earlier with his bride. Next morning, the Maréchal de Villars assures us, 'the royal couple gave evident signs that they were entirely pleased with each other'.

The riff-raff went about singing this song:

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Notre malheur  
Par cette heureuse hyménée [*sic*]  
Notre malheur  
Changera bientôt de couleur  
Et même aussi de cette année  
Il s'en ira comme fumée

The King was obviously very much in love. Marriage had made a new man of him. He was no longer the big child, silent and constrained, which was all the public had beheld in him for many a long year. In his place, had arrived a handsome young man, very affectionate, very ardent, very attentive to his bride, indulging freely in pastimes and in fêtes, no longer trying, as of old, to avoid being seen at public functions, but willing and anxious to revive all the ancient ceremonial of the Court. And this revival of social life was accompanied by a revival of the arts. Goldsmiths, painters, sculptors, decorators, cabinet-makers, all resumed their labours at Versailles. An elderly man might have fancied himself back again in those brilliant days when Louis the Fourteenth was yet a young man. But the gentle La Vallière had gone, and her place was taken by the artless Maria Leczinska.

Louis the Fifteenth was married on September 4th, 1725. On August 14th following, the Queen was brought to bed for the first time. She had wanted a boy. Instead, she had twins – both of them girls. The King was both touched and delighted. He made jests on his qualifications as a parent, invited Stanislas to come and see his grand-daughters, and vowed that next year it should be a Dauphin. But when July, 1728, came round, behold, it was another girl. This time the disappointment was somewhat more pronounced. Maria lamented that she had not given to France the prince that was so eagerly longed for. Louis the Fifteenth consoled her tenderly, and then and there an appointment was fixed with the doctor for the following year. The next time was lucky. On September 4th, 1729, the Dauphin was born. From the time the pains came on, the King never quitted the Queen's bedside. He was wild with pride and exultation. As he bent over Maria his face shone with tenderness and emotion. Henceforth the little Polish girl was no longer merely the King's wife; she was the Dauphin's mother, and that circumstance, while enhancing her prestige, established her still more firmly in Louis' heart. 'No one ever loved as I love,' she wrote, with all a young wife's naive enthusiasm. But once started

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on that road, there was no stopping half-way. Six other children were to follow, one boy – the Duc d'Anjou, and five girls; ten children all told for a father of twenty-seven and a mother of thirty-three. However, they were not all destined to survive. One of the twins had already died in infancy; the Duc d'Anjou only lived three years; another daughter died when she was eight. Nevertheless, seven children lived on.

This auspicious fertility seemed to be the symbol of a new France, a France restored to health and strength; a France that had cured herself of all her ills by her own internal vigour, like some mighty being of high renown, assured of her glories to come.



## CHAPTER V

### THE CARDINAL

THE Duc de Bourbon had been in office three years, and he had upset everybody; the court by his overbearing ways; the commercial classes by his inconsequent tampering with the coinage, the land owners by the income-tax of two per cent, the town by his resuscitation of obsolete dues long since forgotten, the working classes by arbitrary salary reductions, the peasantry by the taxes on commodities, the humbler dogs of the underworld and the unemployed by his fierce and blind repression of mendicancy.

On the demand of some of the bishops, he had revived the laws against Protestants, but the only result of that unfortunate procedure, had been to impoverish the provinces of the Garonne by forcing the Protestants to transfer themselves to Holland and Prussia. In 1725, complaints rose to a shriek. The rains had ruined the harvest, bread was scarce and dear, eight sous the pound, almost three times as much as it had been six months previously. There was rioting at Rouen, Rennes, and Caen, where the intendant narrowly escaped with his life. In Paris itself, on Saturday, August 14th, the rioters pillaged the bakeries in the Faubourg Saint Antoine, and mounted police were obliged to charge, in order to compel the mob to disperse.

Kept informed of what was taking place every day by Fleury, Louis the Fifteenth was still holding his hand, when by a piece of egregious stupidity, the Duc de Bourbon precipitated his own downfall. His attempts to persuade the King to dispense with the council and to govern with him alone having hitherto proved unsuccessful, he thought to gain his end by enlisting the sympathies of the Queen. At the suggestion of Stanislas, she had already given him a testimony of her grateful regard, by accepting Madame de Prie as one of her ladies-in-waiting, and Pâris-Duverney as her secretary. Nevertheless, she felt that she was in honour bound to take a hand in the minister's scheme.

One day she sent a message to the King by M. de Nangis, begging him to come to her in her private apartments. The King arrived and found there the Duc de Bourbon, who handed him a letter from

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Cardinal de Polignac full of all kinds of accusations against Fleury. The King read it through from beginning to end and then gave it back to the Duke without a word. Taken aback at this silence, the Duke asked him what he thought of the imputations contained in the letter.

'Nothing.'

'Has Your Majesty no orders to give?'

'Only that things are to remain as they are.'

Stammering and very red in the face the Duke went on:

'Am I then to understand that your Majesty is displeased with me?'

'Yes.'

'Your Majesty has no longer any favours for me?'

'No.'

'M. de Fréjus alone is in Your Majesty's confidence?'

'Yes.'

Forthwith the Duke flung himself at the King's feet and with fervent protestations of fidelity and obedience, humbly implored his pardon. Louis the Fifteenth looked at him a moment, and then said curtly:

'I pardon you.'

And he quitted the room without so much as a glance at Maria, who was trembling all over and greatly upset.

But Fleury had long been expecting that the Minister would attempt to bring off some such underhand trick to his detriment, and no sooner had he made sure that the Duke was closeted with the King, than he went to present himself to the Queen, only to find the door, so to speak, shut in his face. That was enough. Straightway he quitted Versailles, leaving his pupil a respectful and affectionate letter of farewell, saying that 'as there now seemed to be no further need for his services, he begged the King's permission to finish out his days in peace and quiet, and make ready for his end in the society of the Sulpicians of Issy, to whose house he was about to retire.' The King shut himself up in his own apartments. The Duc de Bourbon had placed him in a position of extreme difficulty, and there was no way of getting out of it without a rupture. Here then he was, at sixteen, compelled to do the very thing which, of all others, he hated most. For a whole hour he strode up and down his room, weeping and worried beyond endurance. At last he took the plunge. The Duke was ordered to write in his own hand to Fleury and say that the King was awaiting him.

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The Duke only remained in office a few months longer. He had no one to back him but the Queen who, greatly as she deplored having to displease her husband, would insist on meddling in politics, and meddling on the losing side. At length, on June 11th, 1726, Louis the Fifteenth went to Rambouillet. The Duke was to follow later on, after he had received the ambassadors. Before starting, the King said a few words to him in quite a friendly vein. 'I shall expect you,' he said 'for cards; and I shan't begin without you.' At seven o'clock, the Duke was preparing to enter his coach, when the Duc de Charost, the Captain of the Guard, handed him a letter from the King. 'I order you,' it ran, 'under penalty for disobedience, to proceed to Chantilly and to stay there until further orders.' At the same moment, Fleury made his way into the Queen's presence to announce the news to her and to teach her her lesson. By way of introduction, he handed this other note, reading as follows:

'I beg you, Madame, and, if need be, I command you, to take note of what the former Bishop of Fréjus will communicate to you and to regard it as if it came from me personally.' The Duke's downfall brought with it the downfall of his minions. Madame de Prie received orders to betake herself to her Château at Courbetine, with her husband as her sole companion. She went and was bored to distraction. In 1727, her servants found her lying dead upon her bed. Perhaps she had poisoned herself. The Pârises retired to the provinces. Pâris-Duverney, brought to book for his financial operations, was arrested, clapped into gaol, and finally declared unfit to plead. The public were so overjoyed at the Duke's being sent into exile, that the Lieutenant of Police had to exert his utmost efforts to prevent them from illuminating the city.

And now who was going to take the fallen minister's place? Like Louis the Fourteenth after the death of Mazarin, Louis the Fifteenth gave out that he was going to govern without a Prime Minister. 'Sensible as I am of the zeal displayed by the Duc de Bourbon,' said he addressing the Council, 'and great as is the affection which I still retain for him, I have considered it necessary to suppress and abolish the title and functions of Prime Minister . . . Councils will continue to be held as heretofore on the days set apart for them, and matters will be dealt with by them as in the past. With regard to such exemptions as I may be called upon to authorize, such matters must be referred direct to me, and I will hand the memoranda regarding them to my Keeper of the Seals, to my Secretaries of State and to my Controller of Finance. I will appoint the time for their deliberations,

in which deliberations the Bishop of Fréjus will always take part, as well as in all Councils and Conferences at which other members are present *ex officio*.' This last clause completely stultified the rest of the pronouncement. Enjoying the King's confidence and affection, taking part in all his audiences, guiding him in his work, having a seat in the higher Council in which the great affairs of State were disposed of, and in which neither Villars nor d'Huxelles could hope to say him nay, Fleury, though he did not actually bear the title, was a prime minister more absolute and more firmly established than any of his predecessors in that office. He was seventy-three years of age in 1726. He died in 1743 at the age of ninety, without having forfeited for a single instant the affection and regard of his former pupil.

Historians have commonly denied that Fleury possessed the qualities that go to make up a statesman, namely, breadth of view, boldness of initiative, a fondness and capacity for far-reaching enterprises. They had taxed him with meanness and timidity, with being suspicious and cowardly. His prudence they ascribed to senility, his pacificism to pusillanimity. In all this they have been misled by appearances. This grand old man, with his smile, his open expression, his timid utterance, whose greatest delight was to watch a game of tennis, was in his inmost soul, 'a proud and implacable man', a stubborn soul possessed by a passionate love of power. No doubt he was not richly endowed with ideas or imagination, but what he willed, he willed effectively. He was patient, tenacious, and grimly energetic. He was no slave to time; he simply went on and on and bided his time. He never let his own age affect his calculations. To such as reminded him of it, he replied that it had indeed been his privilege to live to a great age, but that that was a defect of which he hoped it would take a long time to cure him. Others, ten years younger than himself, who tried to get him to find berths for their sons, he told not to worry, saying:

'I promise you I'll look after them when you're dead.'

'Oh, that's all right then,' said the Archbishop of Paris to him one day. 'I'll commend my nephew to your Eternity's good offices.'

Nevertheless, though he was excellent at going forward and carrying on himself, he was a very poor hand at contradicting other people. It is true that the Abbé Dorsanne, who knew him in the days of the Regency, reports that in the *Conseil de Conscience*, of which he was a member, there was once an occasion when he refused to listen to the smallest objection, rudely sweeping aside all his opponents' arguments;

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but such manifestations were wholly exceptional. To take a firm tone, to return a categorical refusal to anyone, cost him a terrible effort. And so it was that, conscious of his weakness in this direction, and skilful at husbanding his resources, he took the precaution to surround himself with men who in every respect were his direct opposites: Chauvelin, Keeper of the Seals and Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, brilliant, choleric, curt, biting in his rejoinders, a man who overawed the ambassadors and took upon himself the direction of affairs; Orry, Controller General of Finance, heavy, brutish, massive, who could cow a suppliant with a mere look. When Fleury felt himself being pressed uncomfortably hard, he doubled back on his tracks and called up one of his bull dogs. For years on end, he bamboozled the English with the famous 'turn', in which he played the part of the timid old man who is continually being bullied and persecuted by an implacable colleague. While they were thoroughly persuaded of his straightforwardness and kindly intentions, he excused himself from complying with their demands on the grounds that Chauvelin would not budge an inch, lamenting his unhappy lot and saying all kinds of uncomplimentary things about his colleague, but saying also that he was indispensable because he was such an admirable worker and such a marvellous expositor. All this gave his policy an outward aspect of extreme complexity. A superficial examination of it might reveal what seemed only a tissue of little pettifogging expedients and opportunist devices. But a more careful scrutiny would soon disclose its sweeping lines and its amazing coherency. Neither versatility nor personal ambition can be ascribed to him. Fleury desired but one thing, and that was the welfare of the State. Two months after the Duke's fall, he was created Cardinal at the King's request, and the red hat set the seal on his ambition. He had no family to provide for, no favourite to look after. The fact that he had roughed it all his young days in colleges and seminaries, had thoroughly taught him the art of 'going without'. But, contrary to what is so often the case, his privations did not engender base and sordid avarice, a thirst for money and property and revenue. No man in the whole world thought less about acquiring wealth. He could have taken what he liked; and he took nothing. His establishment was of the simplest; his table, his carriages, all his appointments were plain as plain could be. He spent scarcely anything except on charity, and he made the State follow his example. He had good sense enough to bear the Queen no malice. On the contrary, he did his utmost, by

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the exercise of his paternal authority, to unite the sovereigns in an ever closer bond of connubial intimacy. Though he did not resign himself wholly into the hands of his ministers, he kept them in office as long as possible. His own term of office was notable for the general feeling of stability which it created, and the impression that the country was being guided with common sense, prudence and a respect for law and order. But sound reasoning alone does not carry the day, nor is good order born of a policy of *laissez-faire*. Fleury's ascendancy was, in reality, seventeen years of unremitting effort, of hard and ceaseless labour.

When the Duke fell, the four Secretaries of State were Saint Florentin for the Reformed Religion, so-called; Maurepas for the Navy and the Royal household; while Breteuil was at the War Office, and Morville had charge of Foreign Affairs. Finance came under the purview of President Dodun, a sound lawyer but rather non-plussed by the economic problems confronting him, and completely under the thumb of the *Pârisés*. Finally, as Keeper of the Seals, Morville's father, Fleuriau d'Armenonville, acted for the Chancellor Daguesseau, who had been banished to his estates at Fresnes.

Fleury retained Saint Florentin and Maurepas, who remained on in charge of their respective offices, the former until 1775, the latter until 1749. Breteuil he replaced by le Blanc, whose departure from the army was regretted by all ranks. When, in 1728, le Blanc died, Fleury appointed in his place d'Angervilliers, who had been successively intendant of Alsace, of the Dauphiny and of Paris. D'Angervilliers occupied this post for twelve years, and, on his death in 1740, Breteuil again returned to it.

In the course of the deliberations which had preceded the marriage of the King, as well as in the negotiations with Rome on the subject of Jansenism, Morville had made it evident that he was too thoroughly a party man to stay on under another master. His place was taken by one of the presidents of Parlement, to wit Chauvelin (1727-1737) and subsequently by a man of lesser calibre, Amelot de Chaillou (1737-1744). Two Controllers-General looked after the department of Finance, one a Counsellor of State, Le Pelletier des Forts, and the other, a provincial intendant named Orry, who had had le Soissonnais and Rousillon under his governance. Le Pelletier des Forts lasted four years (1726-1730); Orry, fifteen (1730-1745).

Fleury at length recalled Daguesseau - Daguesseau, the witty, the eloquent - whose memory and knowledge of the law were boundless. It is at this period that the great enactments concerning bequests,

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wills, civil and criminal procedure, the tutelage of minors and the costs of legal proceedings, in short the 'Code Louis the Fifteenth', came into force. But, since by reason of his excessive scrupulosity, Daguesseau was afflicted with an almost morbid state of irresolution, Fleury appointed a Vice-Chancellor to stiffen his determination. Armenonville having tendered his resignation, Chauvelin took the father's place, as he had previously taken the son's. In short, ten people sufficed to fill all the government places for fifteen years.

The most urgent task was to put the finances in order. Hitherto, France had had no stable currency. Between the value of gold and the value of silver, there was no legally fixed ratio, and the rate was incessantly fluctuating as the needs of the government might dictate. Moreover, Law's System had brought about a tremendous rise in prices which subsequent events had not wholly discounted. Although all Law's paper money had been called in, the cost of living was still higher than it had been in 1717. Now the chief aim of Dodun and the Pârises had been to bring down prices by the process which we now call deflation, and which consists in restricting the means of payment.

In these days of paper currencies, the State banks have power to increase or diminish the quantity of notes in circulation. The greater the abundance of notes, the less is the purchasing power of any one of them, with the result that prices go up. The fewer they are, the more their purchasing power increases; so down they come again. But the thing is much more difficult to work in the case of a metal currency. You cannot manipulate gold as you can manipulate pieces of paper, and you cannot call in the coinage every year in order to melt it down and re-issue it with different values. This, therefore, is how the matter was dealt with:

The monetary unit of the old regime was the livre, but that was merely a theoretic standard, and the coins in actual circulation possessed no constant value. On the reverse of the louis d'or or the silver crown-piece there was no indication in figures of the number of livres represented, as, for example, 'twenty livres' or 'six livres'. But from time to time an Order in Council regulated the rate at which these coins would be accepted by the revenue authorities and by private individuals. According as the King might determine, the same number of louis d'or and crown-pieces might represent a greater or less number of livres. In February, 1724, the louis was worth 24 livres and the crown 6; in March, the louis was brought down to 20 and the crown to 5; in September, the louis was only

good for 16 livres and the crown for 4; in December, 1725, the louis was reduced to 14 and the crown to 3 livres, 10 sous. In other words, within two years the quantity of money in circulation had been reduced by close on one half, without any change whatever in the number and weight of the coins in circulation.

The Pârises were confident that prices would accommodate themselves to the variations in the coinage; but it is a matter of constant experience that retail prices do not adjust themselves in a day to these currency variations. There is invariably an hiatus of several weeks, sometimes of several months, between the two processes. Moreover, when currency variations become a matter of habit, it is not the rate of the day which regulates prices, but the rate which those concerned imagine will rule to-morrow. To guard against contingent loss, everyone tries to sell as dear as he can. It was all very well for the Controller-General to order the intendants to put a tax on prime necessities and, if necessary, forcibly to bring about a corresponding reduction in salaries and wages; the results obtained were inconsiderable. For the rest, as the public were once more beginning to cry out against the scarcity of money, Dodun went over the same road again, but in an opposite direction. By three stages, the louis was bought up to 24 livres, and the crown piece to 6. But on this occasion, the rise was accompanied by an issue of new money. Louis and crowns had to be surrendered at the Mint and its branches for exchange against the new money, the government reaping all the advantage of the difference in the rate.

These constantly recurring changes paralysed commerce by depriving the trader of any stable basis for his transactions. Fleury and Le Pelletier realized that the best way to restore prosperity was to establish a stable currency, which should always remain at par. An Order in Council dated June 15th, 1726, provided that the louis should be fixed at 24 livres, and the crown at 6 livres for a period of six months. In December, came another order extending the operation of the previous one for an additional six months. Six months later, followed yet a third extension, and so on indefinitely. Finally, on November 11th, 1728, it was decided that the order should be considered as a standing one and the value of the coinage fixed in perpetuity. Except for a slight variation, brought about in 1785 by a glut of silver, it remained unchanged up to the time of the Revolution. Thus the year 1726 stands out as one of the most important in the economic history of France. For the first time, France had at her disposal a real medium of exchange, and this fact



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explains, at least in part, the great wave of prosperity which was about to sweep through the country.

But it would be an error to imagine that the wisdom of these measures was immediately apparent to the multitude. The first time any difficulties arose, there were plenty of people ready to blame the fixed parity, and to demand a return to the old system of variable exchange. D'Argenson's Memoirs are full of diatribes against Orry, the gravamen of his charge being precisely the obstinate determination of the Controller to maintain the stability of the franc. In 1739 and 1740, the attacks upon it were particularly determined. Late rains had seriously damaged the crops, the farmers were getting in a very poor harvest and Paris, as well as the larger towns, had to be victualled with imported wheat. The result was that, in the rural districts, there was a regular money famine, which weighed the more heavily on the peasants as bread had gone up from four to five sous the pound. Besieged by people with pet nostrums, accused of deliberately organizing the famine, Orry nevertheless braved out the storm. In spite of all the clamour, he refused to make the slightest change in his policy. The historians follow Voltaire like a flock of sheep, and say that all Fleury need have done was to allow France to get well by herself. That would have been altogether too easy and too attractive a scheme. To make recovery possible, certain antecedent conditions were indispensable. It was to the credit of Fleury and his collaborators, that they both recognized and imposed them.

The year 1726 has yet another claim upon our recollection. It was that year which witnessed the establishment, or rather the re-establishment of the *Ferme-Générale*, the famous association of financiers to whom in return for valuable consideration, the task of getting in the indirect taxes (salt tax, customs, wine duties, etc.) was entrusted. The contract between the Crown and the Ferme was concluded on August 19th for a period of six years. The forty tax-farmers whose names appeared in the agreement guaranteed the State an annual revenue of 80 millions, irrespective of the actual returns from the taxes they were authorized to collect. Whether times were good or bad, the Government was assured of its revenue, on which, as soon as the contract was signed, the association was to grant an advance at an easy rate of interest. All contemporary writers have accused the tax-farmers of shameless profiteering, and, to hear the publicists, one would imagine that the amount paid over to the Government was always conspicuously below the amount

of the taxes received. It is true that the first lease, known as the Carlier lease, was disadvantageous to the Government, first, because the calculations had been based on the proceeds of a mismanaged monopoly, and secondly because the increase of trade having exceeded all expectations, the farmers were for six years the only people to profit by it. But as from time to time, the contract came up for revision, the Government's conditions became progressively more stringent. The financiers continued to make handsome profits, but they were more equitably proportioned to the risks incurred and the capital involved. The 1738 lease guaranteed the State an annual sum of 91 millions (tobacco included); the 1750 lease, 102 millions; the 1765, lease 110. This progress at once reflects a stricter administrative control, and a steady increase in wealth.

The best of financiers suffer from a disability common to them all: they do not appeal to the imagination. The case of Orry shows that a good Chancellor of the Exchequer is, at bottom, nothing more than a good accountant furnished with a few simple principles which serve him in place of inspiration. To cut his coat according to his cloth was his first elementary and excellent rule. Backed up by the frugal Fleury, he kept a strict watch over the nation's purse. Towards 1739, he succeeded in balancing the budget, and that without having recourse to a loan. Such a thing was not to happen again before the Restoration. His second rule was that the taxpayers ought to be studied, and that it was folly to rub them up the wrong way for no useful purpose. He simplified the mode of tax recovery and did away with the more flagrant abuses. When war came, he put on an extraordinary tax of ten per cent on income; when peace was restored, he took it off again. These 'tenths', which Louis the Fourteenth had already attempted to levy were, save in exceptional cases which were settled on their merits, payable by every French subject, regardless of rights and privileges. It was an attempt at equal taxation, temporary, extraordinary no doubt, but it was also a distinct menace to the privileges of the upper classes. In due course another Orry was to endeavour to make it an enduring reality.

The State is rarely lacking in servants with plenty of technical ability and in capable administrators, painstaking practitioners of the rule-of-three order. The drawback is that their work is precarious. Their success depends on causes outside their own control. Time and again, Orry had to put up with mere hand to mouth expedients; time and again he was forced to recast his figures.

Two or three political blunders in succession would have brought all his plans to the ground. With unfailing patience he came back again and again to his method, which never failed of success so long as the necessary conditions were fulfilled. It was a thankless sort of task and won him few friends; no one gave him any credit for his perseverance. Useful and salutary as his labours were, he was, like Colbert, one of the best-hated men of his times.

The task of setting the financial house in order gave the Cardinal less trouble than did that of restoring tranquillity to the public mind. The eighteenth century, which usually passes for an age of scepticism, profligacy and disbelief in God, was full of theological disputes, prophets, miracles and outbreaks of fanaticism. People even came to blows in their disputes about Grace, Free-will and Predestination. A religious war, a distant reverberation of the struggles of the sixteenth century, set the Jesuits and the Jansenists at defiance, stirred the popular conscience to its depths, and undermined the influence of the Crown by alienating a section of the magistracy and the middle classes.

From 1640 to 1750, the Jansenists occupy a predominating position in the moral history of the old regime because, in spite of their doctrinal errors, they did in fact represent the most powerful elements in the Catholic reaction against certain government tendencies of the sixteenth century. The leaders of the Renaissance, although they had not always proclaimed it, had always taken it for granted that Nature was beneficent, and life a pleasant thing; and that the aim and object of art was to gratify the senses and charm the imagination. They entertained few doubts, or none at all, as to the truth of Christian dogma and sometimes behaved with cruelty in defending it, but where art, or the pleasures of the senses were concerned, they forgot all about dogma, or contrived, by more or less unorthodox expedients, to twist it to their own purposes. Sincere Catholics though they generally were, their lives and conduct were suggestive of sceptics or epicureans. Jansenism was a protest against all this comfortable optimism. The founders and rulers of Port Royal were stern, unbending men, soldiers and magistrates for the most part, and they aimed at giving back to religion something of its nobility, its dignity and its power. They demanded that it should become once more an austere and difficult school, and were patient neither of concession nor of compromise. Rigid and virile was the rule of life they proposed to the *élite* of the nation, and though

their Christianity seems, for the most part, to have been but a moral code, that moral code was based on a particularly vivid interpretation of the doctrine of the Fall of Man. Therein they approximated to St. Augustine, who, in an age of moral decadence, had also insisted on the unworthiness of man, as set forth in the doctrine of Original Sin. The treatise *Augustinus*, written by Jansenius, Bishop of Ypres, and published at Louvain in 1640, became the Port Royal bible, and the name Jansenius was used a label to distinguish the whole sect. The Jansenist teaching, rejecting all compromise with the failings of humanity, was opposed at all points to the easy-going and indulgent precepts of the Jesuits. The Jansenists accused the Jesuits of palliating and countenancing the most reprehensible derelictions, of debasing the Communion into a mere custom, of bringing down the Sacraments to the level of mere observances and of minimizing the sovereign power of Divine Grace. The Jesuits retorted that the Jansenists annihilated Free-Will, under-estimated the value of the Atonement and professed a sort of *réchauffé* of Calvinism.

Petty jealousies and high politics combined to complicate the quarrel. While the quartos of the Jesuits were mouldering undisturbed on the booksellers' shelves, the laity were fighting desperately to procure copies of the *Provincial Letters* of Pascal. The Jansenists had opened some first-rate little schools where the moribund interest in Greek and Latin literature, as well as in more modern subjects of study, was revived by new methods of instruction. No doubt their few score pupils were a little enough thing compared with the hundreds of thousands who peopled the schools of the Society of Jesus, but, some day or other, their rivalry might become dangerous. The Jesuits, who were brought into being by the Church's peril, were the restorers of discipline and order. All-powerful in Rome, and, in the provinces, educators of the young, confessors of the great, missionaries among the heathen, bold, intrepid, alert, they confessed no other object for their ambition to dominate the world than to add to the glory of God. The Jansenists set store by Catholic unity, but, so to speak, from motives personal to themselves as separate individuals, and without acknowledging that obedience had any other or higher claim upon them than the dictates of conscience. Finally, while the fighting forces of the Jesuits were by nature and aspiration ultramontane in character, the Jansenists, whose members for the most part were drawn from the magistracy and the professional classes, were Gallicans, jealous guardians of the national Church against the encroachments of the Court of Rome.

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This being the case, how, it may be asked, did it come about that the Jansenists were so cruelly persecuted by Louis the Fourteenth? In the first place, the answer is, for considerations of orthodoxy. Louis the Fourteenth was no theologian, but he thought he was bound in conscience to protect his people against the peril of heresy. Questions of dogma he referred to the judgment of duly qualified authorities, but he deemed it incumbent upon him to see that their decisions were punctually carried into effect by the secular arm. Secondly, the King was too intimately convinced that virtue consists in moderation and sweet-reasonableness, easily to bear with those eminent but over-zealous gentlemen who would necessarily associate virtue with austerity and penitential severity, and taught that Divine Justice was a terrible, capricious and almost tyrannical manifestation of God's power. Lastly, he was afraid of the political potentialities of Jansenism and of its sectarian and separatist tendencies.

The outstanding leaders of the Fronde, the Duchesse de Longueville and Cardinal de Retz in particular, had been Jansenists. Between Port Royal and their Dutch brethren there were relations that were not wholly free from suspicion. Their House was a hot-bed of unrest. Its controversies fomented in men's minds 'a heat and an obstinacy' which, in the long run, might prove prejudicial to public order. All that explains why Louis the Fourteenth desired to apply, in all its rigour, the Bull of Innocent X, which, in 1653, had condemned five propositions out of the *Augustinus*.

The result was a war both prolonged and painful, interrupted by truces, but continually breaking out afresh, a war of which the most dramatic episode was the closing and demolition of Port-Royal des Champs by d'Argenson, the Lieutenant of Police. But these violent measures settled nothing. The *Augustinus* being proscribed, the Jansenists discovered another catechism: Père Quesnel's *Moral Reflections on the Old Testament*, and this book it was that added fresh fuel to the quarrel. The book was taken to Rome and submitted to a conference of Cardinals and theologians. They summed up its teaching in a hundred and one propositions, which they condemned as 'false, captious, unseemly, calculated to offend pious ears, scandalous, pernicious, rash, insulting to the Church, an affront to the secular powers, seditious, impious, blasphemous, heretical in tendency . . . leading to schism, erroneous . . . in a word heresy and the parent of heresy.'

The Bull of condemnation known as the Bull or *Constitutio unigenitus*, was promulgated on September 8th, 1713. With this

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great blow, the Jesuits flattered themselves that they had, at one and the same time stamped out heresy and annihilated the last remaining liberties of the Gallican Church. Had not Louis the Fourteenth, exasperated by the 'factious' opposition of the Jansenists, solemnly declared to the Roman Curia that the Papal decisions should be accepted by the whole clergy in a spirit of blind obedience, and without any sort of limitations or reserve? Truly it was an amazing thing thus to have transformed the descendant of Philippe le Bel and the grandson of Henry the Fourth into the most uncompromising of ultramontanists. But things had gone too far, and deep and hidden forces were at work. Far from being crushed, Jansenism and Gallicanism took on a fresh lease of life.

The Regent had thought to disarm them by a policy of indifference. What happened was just the opposite. When the hand of authority was removed, men's passions were allowed free play.

In its origin, Jansenism was an aristocratic and doctrinal movement; later on, in the eighteenth century, it became popular and emotional. The dispute concerning Grace and St. Augustine became a matter of secondary import. The quarrel was now one between Rome and the Jesuits on the one hand, and the Parlements and the upholders of Gallicanism on the other. The clergy were divided. With greater or less enthusiasm, nearly the whole Episcopate rendered obedience to Rome. On the other side, there was only the Archbishop of Paris, Cardinal de Noailles and four bishops who, in uncompromising opposition to all the rest, persisted in appealing from the Pope to the General Council. But few though the leaders were, their followers were many: the Faculties of Theology, the Canons of Sainte-Geneviève, the Benedictines of Saint Maur and Saint Vannes, the Dominicans, the parish priests of Paris, the great masses of the ordinary clergy, the personnel of the Basoche, advocates, proctors, sheriffs, — in a word, all the rank and file of the faithful, wherever the outpourings of their parish priest were ardent enough to set their enthusiasm on fire. From mere dislike of the Jesuits, all Paris, though it had not read the Bull and did not even know what was in it, was ready to 'damn it at a venture'. But now Fleury was to make his entrance upon the stage. Hitherto, the struggle had been carried on for the King by statesmen and politicians, who, notwithstanding their education and their piety, were not precisely at home in matters of religion. Befogged and bewildered by the subtleties of controversy, easily exasperated, too

ready to proceed to extremities, too prone to imagine that all difficulties were susceptible of a forcible solution, they gave themselves the reputation of tyrants without obtaining that measure of obedience which successful tyranny is accustomed to exact. With more stratagems at his command, and greater freedom from external preoccupations, and above all, a greater familiarity with the art of handling ecclesiastics, Fleury employed a method that was at once gentler and more effective.

What constituted the chief obstacle to pacification? The Jansenist clergy. And, among them, who were the bishops that chiefly had the public ear? The aged Noailles and the Bishop of Montpellier. Little by little, Noailles was side-tracked, enveloped, pin-pricked, cowed, his prestige undermined, his authority destroyed. And then, hardly had he bowed his diminished head, when death removed him from the scene. Vintimille, an ardent upholder of the Papal Bull, sat in his place. The Bishop of Montpellier would also have been a tempting capture; but he was a Colbert, and the Colberts were a highly influential family, and a numerous one, with friends both many and energetic. Fleury thought it safer to crush Soanen, the Bishop of Senes, an old man who had nothing to protect him but his sanctity. Arraigned before a provincial council, presided over by the Archbishop of Embrun, the contemptible Tencin, he was inhibited from his episcopal functions and forthwith relegated to an Abbey in Auvergne. The severity of this sentence intimidated and demoralized the rest of the 'appellants'. With regard to the curés and the monks, the same policy was adopted, a policy of subornation, delations and persecutions. Defections were encouraged and rewarded; those who would not give way were laid under an interdict, compelled to undergo wearisome examinations, brow-beaten and insulted. No wholesale or general measures, which would have stirred up the whole party, were resorted to, but a slow and steady conquest, pushed forward inch by inch, every day. One man was taxed on the score of his vow of obedience, another began to be apprehensive about the continuance of his bread and butter, another feared lest he should be publicly humiliated.

By 1730, Jansenism among the clergy, if not eradicated, was at all events dispersed, disheartened and reduced to silence. Fleury now deemed that the time was ripe to stamp it out amongst the laity and the lawyers. The latter had indulged in rather a sensational protest after the council of Embrun, alleging that it was illegal and its decisions arbitrary. But in this case the Cardinal's usual delicacy

of touch was at fault. These Parlement men were downright, thorough-going gentry, and soft compromises, those tacit understandings which work such wonders in the religious world were totally unavailing with them. They must have everything done according to rule; they like plenty of noise and grandiloquence. They can manage to instil venom into the mildest discussions. The subtleties of diplomacy make no impression on these heads of iron. However much Fleury might favour oblique and indirect methods, however much he might prefer to deal with individual cases, each on its own merits, he had now to face the hazard of a general pronouncement. It took the form of the famous declaration which was issued on March 24th, 1730.

The Bull *Unigenitus*, which was already binding on the French Church, was henceforth to be binding on the French people. But it was to be interpreted in a moderate sense, such as prudent Catholics and loyal citizens had already seen fit to bestow upon it. In order to ensure the peace and tranquillity of the kingdom, the King was determined to make an end, once for all, of these conflicting interpretations, of all this childish hair-splitting in which the opponents of the Bull were incessantly indulging, and of which the ultimate effect would be to undermine the authority of the hierarchy and to bring the Law into general contempt. In consequence, the appeals brought by ecclesiastics against their superiors would no longer be heard in civil courts, save in very exceptional and very clearly defined cases. Lastly, all writings deriving their inspiration from Jansenist sources were henceforward to be prohibited, and severe penalties, varying from a fine to banishment, would be visited upon the authors, depositaries, vendors, printers and all who were in any way connected with the dissemination of such works.

But before recording in its minutes a legislative measure emanating from the Crown, the Parlement had the right to examine and to discuss it. From the outset, it was clear that there was a majority against the declaration. Therefore, without beating about the bush, Fleury decided to have it registered by a special decree of the King, and in the Royal presence. This is what was known as a *Bed of Justice*. The ceremony took place on April 3rd, and marked the beginning of an agitation which went on for three years, following a more or less closely stereotyped programme which was destined to be several times repeated in the course of the century. It consisted, first, of a protest against the registration, then of a *lettre de cachet* of the King's forbidding the Court to re-open a matter that had been



settled at the Bed of Justice; of protests of Parlement against the *lettre de cachet*; next of advocates' memorials in favour of Jansenist curés whose appeals were refused a hearing in the Civil Courts; then an Order in Council suppressing the advocates' memorial and compelling the signatories to retract under pain of losing their professional status; after that, a decree of Parlement declaring the Civil Courts competent to deal with cases which the declaration assigned to the ecclesiastical Courts; finally, an Order in Council quashing the decree of the Parlement. The vacation of 1731 automatically constrained the magistrates to silence. But when the Courts re-assembled in November, they decided to go in person and lay their protest at the foot of the Throne. In the midst of a tumultuous crowd, fifty presidents and councillors bundled themselves hastily into fourteen coaches and set out for Marly. But the emissaries of the Lieutenant of Police contrived to steal a march on them. On their arrival they found neither Fleury, nor the Chancellor, nor Maurepas, nor the Keeper of the Seals, nor indeed anyone of the requisite rank to introduce them into the King's presence. After an hour, having knocked unavailingly at ten several doors, they were met by the Duc de Tresmes who came to inform them in the King's name that his Majesty was surprised to learn that they were there, that he had nothing to say to them and that he desired them to depart.

Ashamed of their escapade, the fifty petitioners returned crest-fallen along the road to Paris. But if their conduct had been ridiculous, the noise they made next day about their exploit was proportionately loud. They demanded of Portail, the President in Chief, that he should apply in due order for an audience for himself, so that he might represent to the King that the Parlement, feeling that it had been slighted, seriously contemplated suspending its functions. An audience was granted, but the unhappy Portail had scarcely opened his mouth when the King signified his displeasure and turned his back upon him. That, however, was not the end of the matter. The Parlement men were indefatigable and insatiable. They again made urgent application to be received in a body. Again their request was granted. On January the 10th, 1732, the President in Chief, the *présidents à mortier* and the *doyens* of the Council were summoned to Versailles. No sooner had they arrived than they were informed by Maurepas that the King forbade them, jointly and severally, to make any speeches after he himself had spoken. Thereupon they were introduced into the State Room of

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Louis the Fourteenth. The King was there with Fleury, the Chancellor, the Keeper of the Seals and the Duc d'Orléans.

'This,' observed the King, 'is the second time you have compelled me to send for you that I may signify my disapproval of your behaviour. My Chancellor will acquaint you with my intentions.' It was then Daguesseau's turn. He drew the attention of the members to the irregularity and unseemliness of their conduct, reminding them of the reiterated injunctions of the King, and informing them that His Majesty would henceforth regard as disobedient and rebellious all who endeavoured to evade them. He terminated his discourse as follows:

'To sum up, the power of making laws and interpreting them is wholly and solely vested in the King. The business of Parlement is merely to see that those laws are punctually obeyed, and it must restrict itself to the limits of authority which it pleases His Majesty to assign to it for the administration of justice. The King is aware of the full extent of his sovereign power and needs no reminder to encourage him to see that the laws and customs of the Kingdom are scrupulously upheld. He has hitherto always seen to it, and he will continue to see to it, that they suffer no affront. But the most inviolable of the laws which concern the Royal authority is that it is never lawful to withhold from it the obedience to which it is entitled. The most essential and indispensable part of a magistrate's duty is to set a becoming example to the other subjects of the King and to show forth his loyalty by deeds rather than by words.'

After this the King himself added: 'Such is my will. Do not compel me to make you feel that I am your master.'

For some weeks there was silence at the Palace. But the quarrel broke out afresh in connection with a secret Jansenist organ, *les Nouvelles Ecclésiastiques*, the circulation of which the police had vainly attempted to prevent. From time to time they succeeded in laying hands on a few isolated copies, but they knew not, and were never able to discover, who were its authors, printers or publishers. At last, abandoning the search, Vintimille took the law into his hands and declared its editors to be heretics, forbidding anyone to read it, under pain of excommunication. One and twenty Paris curés refused to read the episcopal charge from their pulpits and appealed to Parlement. And then followed the familiar series of remonstrances, orders, protests, Beds of Justice – the whole thing all over again. This time, indeed, matters were carried a little farther. The judges refused to sit, and for several months the

machinery of the Law was at a standstill. By order of the King, a president and five councillors were arrested and a hundred and thirty-nine minor magistrates were scattered about the country between Soissons and Angoulême, and forbidden to leave their places of residence.

Before very long, however, the exiles grew sick of that sort of life. It was all very well to play at being Romans, and to be called the Fathers of their Country. But they were not heroes. Most of them had thought that they would be sequestered in their country houses, and they found living in inns was anything but congenial. The newly married among them missed their wives; the others, their mistresses; and all of them longed for Paris with its sights and gaieties. At last peace was concluded on such terms that faces on both sides were saved and no susceptibilities were wounded. The great quarrel came to an end, as Fleury wanted it to come to an end, without much ado, and without much expense.

Alas, while on one side the fight was dying down for lack of combatants, on the other it broke out afresh owing to a sudden, tumultuous and totally unforeseen eruption of Jansenism in a popular and sentimental form. After arguments about religion, the question had taken on the form of dispute about procedure; now it became a battle about miracles.

Marvellous cures had already been wrought in several dioceses which had singularly benefited the opponents of the Bull, notably in the diocese of Rheims, from the touch of a priest named Rousse who, during the major part of his lifetime, had not been a person of any great account. Certain people whom Saint Rémy had not deigned to assist, had, with the aid of Rousse, been completely restored to health. Then, after investigations had been carried out by the Archbishop, the miracles had ceased and Rousse had sunk again into oblivion. Meanwhile, on May 1st, 1727, the death occurred in Paris of a certain deacon of the parish of Saint Médard named Pâris whose brother was in the Parlement. This same Pâris enjoyed a great reputation for piety. Though his income amounted to ten thousand livres a year, he gave his money to the poor, slept without sheets, and ate nothing but vegetables. Implacable in his hostility to the Bull, he had signed appeal after appeal, and had died calling down vengeance on the Jesuits. 'They cannot be too thoroughly exposed,' he had thundered. No sooner was his death made known in the parish, than a crowd of devotees came thronging to his bedside. The more excited among them cut off his hair and

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handed it round among themselves; others touched his remains with rosaries, medals and prayer books. They took away his clothes and shared them out with one another. They broke up his furniture and carried off the fragments as relics. At his funeral, a woman flung herself on the coffin and shouted that her arm which had been useless for twenty-five years had suddenly recovered the power of movement. However, the scene could not have made much of a sensation, for Barbier, who always knew everything that happened, does not even mention it. But in September, it was reported that a fruiterer, who had been suffering from ulcers in the leg, had been cured by having a piece of wood belonging to the deacon's bed applied to the sore place. A surgeon, an old-clothes woman, a lace maker and two shop-boys came forward as witnesses. One after another, three fresh miracles were proclaimed and people began to visit the dead man's grave as if he had been a saint. From five o'clock in the morning till five in the afternoon, the graveyard of Saint Médard's was filled with people who had come from the most distant parts of Paris. All the approaches were thronged with vehicles of every description, plying for public hire. Sometimes it took several hours to force one's way through the crowd and reach the grave, which was now surrounded with seating accommodation for which a charge was made. Sick persons lay down on the tombstone and were seized with convulsions, others foamed at the mouth and dribbled. Neither rain nor cold could keep away the sightseers. A gaping, gasping crowd gazed at the paroxysms of the patients and were gradually carried away by the same frenzy. On some days, as many as a hundred persons at a time were seized with convulsions. Amazing stories began to go the round. It was reported that an unbeliever, the Chevalier de Folard, had been stricken with epilepsy, and that a female impersonator had fallen down in a paralytic fit, her mouth all awry and one side of her body incapable of motion. In the parish of Saint Benoît, a flagellation society was discovered, run by six priests. Sects sprang up proclaiming that the Day of Judgment was at hand; others prophesied vengeance from heaven, and, as if to hurry on the end of the world by wearing out the Divine patience, themselves gave way to hideous debauchery. At Montpellier, one Cosse, known as Frère Augustin, gave himself out as the fourth person of the Trinity. He held forth at public meetings, and when he had finished his discourse, he would lie down on a table in the posture of the Spotless Lamb and, in that attitude, invite the people to adore him. At Troyes, a certain Abbé Vaillant was

honoured as a fresh incarnation of the prophet Elijah. In Paris there were secret associations of 'shakers', who met 'together to pray, sing, perform sacrifices and indulge in orgies. One day, the members of one of these communities marched in procession to Port Royal, and, on the site of the former Abbey cut the throat of an animal, and with its blood smeared the houses, right into Versailles, of those whom the Avenging Angel was to spare. Finally, they drew lots to decide which one of their number should be sacrificed in complete expiation of the crimes committed by them. Fate pointed to an Abbé whose name according to some was Sevin, according to others, Sellier. They were preparing to crucify him when fear of death stimulated the mental faculties of the intended victim into remarkable activity. He pointed out to his companions that Jesus Christ had sweated blood and water before resigning Himself to execution, and observed that he himself would like a little time for preparation. He was granted a respite of twenty-four hours, and took advantage of it to disappear.

These follies made Fleury's task the easier since they allowed him to use repressive measures without compunction or constraint. Medical men, commissioned by him, revealed the baselessness of the alleged miracles. On the grounds that the crowds of spectators interfered with the traffic in the neighbourhood of Saint Médard, the Lieutenant of Police gave orders that the cemetery should be closed (January, 1732). Having made up its quarrel with the Court, Parlement associated itself with these repressive measures. On the instructions of the Procurator General, Joly de Fleury, it sentenced Frère Augustin and some of his accomplices, three of whom were women, to a term of imprisonment. Abandoned by its ecclesiastical and political allies, stultified and rendered ridiculous by its own excesses, Jansenism, this time, came to final grief. The victory was an important one, and the significance of it should not be overlooked.

Fleury's action in the matter had not been that of a party leader. The Bull he regarded with only qualified approval; he agreed with the Abbé Dorsanne that it was not a first-rate piece of work, 'and that the hundred and one propositions were not condemnable in themselves but only when taken in conjunction one with another'. Frequently, too, he was put out of patience by the doctrinal extravagances of the more uncompromising among the champions of the Bull. Finally, if he forbade the Parlement to interfere in matters of religion, he did not intend that the Church of France should be

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entirely subordinated to the interests of the Roman Curia. He was a Gallican, just as he was an anti-Jansenist, *in his fashion*, that is to say, with moderation. Thus, in spite of appearances, his religious policy was more political than religious. M. Georges Hardy, who has written his history, justly remarks that it 'hinges on to the other dominant problems of his term of office; his desire to establish social order, economic prosperity, and political peace in Europe'. Realizing, from experience of the Regency, that 'conciliation was out of the question, he made use of the Bull as an instrument for the furtherance of his plans. He made no attempt to win over the whole-hearted adhesion of his adversaries; his sole aim was to prevent public disorder. He was only moderately concerned with conditions of Catholicity at home. . . His attempts were directed not so much to convincing men, as to keeping them in order. . . The aim of all his endeavours was silence.'

That is so true that the ultramontanist bishops are continually unbraiding him with lukewarmness, for ever harassing him with their complaints; he never goes far enough, never strikes hard enough, to please them. Provocative utterances, scandals, violent recriminations, refusal of the sacraments, pamphlets, incendiary charges; they were for anything no matter what that would bring matters to a head. 'Keep quiet' Fleury was for ever saying to them, 'Possess your souls in peace.' But what a business it was for him to gain a hearing! 'I have read your charge,' he wrote to La Fare, the Bishop of Laon, 'and I cannot help observing that you seem to be anxious to start a conflagration all round. It is full of bitterness and harsh sayings, and, if I may say so, its tone hardly becomes a bishop. . . . It is a pity that you always will insist on getting yourself talked about. Even if you had not added your name, your style, full as it is of gall and bitterness, would have revealed you.' Finally, this is the crowning sentence. 'All I ask of you is to keep quiet, and to confine yourself to performing the duties of a good bishop.' To do his duty, to keep quiet; very humble words, perhaps but, in the circumstances, there could have been none more sensible, none more suited to the occasion.

Looking back on this protracted affair, the Cardinal, it cannot be denied, might have adopted better plans to extinguish the dispute; but at least it can be claimed for him that, through all this maze of conflicting passions and rival interests, he kept the even tenour of his way. Jansenism once sacrificed to the interests of public order and the calming of popular excitement, he had prevented all

manifestations of vindictiveness, and restrained the supporters of the Bull from pushing their victory to extremes. His mode of handling the affair may not have been remarkable for its brilliance, but it was to a notable degree, adroit and adapted to the circumstances of the case. At all events, it succeeded, and to Fleury the Kingdom was indebted for twenty years of domestic peace.

It had to thank him too, for other benefits. The foreign policy of the Regent and the Duc de Bourbon had exhibited three defects. It had been neither straightforward, nor far-sighted nor national in spirit. As a result of intrigues and private ambitions, they had brought matters into such a tangle that it looked yet again as though France might be dragged into a war with which she had no concern.

Irritated at the treatment meted out to the Infanta, Philip the Fifth had veered over to the Hapsburgs, and had concluded a treaty of alliance with Charles the Sixth at Vienna, the object of which was not so much to wreak vengeance on Louis the Fifteenth as to put a spoke in the wheel of England. Philip the Fifth hoped to recover Gibraltar, and the Emperor, who was master of Belgium, was busying himself in stimulating that aspiration by setting up at Ostend a trading concern that should rival the English companies. As a set-off against the Austro-Spanish coalition, a Franco-Anglo-Prussian triple alliance had been formed at Hanover. But neither group was very firmly established. Philip still had dreams of setting up the children of his second marriage in the Italian Duchies, and it was not without apprehension that Charles the Sixth beheld the penetration of Spain into a territory which, for ten years, had been subjected to Austrian influence. On the other side, as soon as it looked as though there was going to be a war, Prussia had cried off. The Sergeant-King, who was immensely proud of his expensive army, was in mortal dread at the idea of risking it on the field of battle. And so he never did risk it. In short, when in February, 1727, Philip laid siege to Gibraltar, France on the continent alone remained face to face with Spain, and Austria had to bear the full brunt of a conflict of which her maritime ally stood to reap the sole advantage.

Summoned by London to carry out the terms of the alliance, Fleury was in no hurry to reply, but in secret he brought his influence to bear on the less determined of the combatants, that is to say on the Emperor. Through the medium of the Pope, he suggested a skilful compromise which, by holding up the Ostend company for seven years, would disarm the English and isolate the Spaniards. After

being hammered at for three months Charles the Sixth agreed. The ex-duke of Anjou had not yet given up all hope of succeeding to the French Crown on the death of Louis the Fifteenth. But Fleury knew better than anybody how strong and sturdy his pupil was, and the excellent terms he was on with his wife. He therefore did not hesitate a moment to promise Philip his entire support should occasion arise. In exchange for this comic-opera undertaking, Philip raised the siege of Gibraltar. The risk of war being removed, it now only remained to settle the minor questions that had been left in suspense. These were the subject of very complicated negotiations which lasted four years, during which Fleury's labours were several times imperilled. Europe was in such an uncertain state that all or anything seemed possible in the way of political alliances. With several rival systems to choose from, the governments decided on none to the exclusion of the rest, but tried them all in turn. Fleury in Paris and Walpole in London were, generally speaking, inclined for peace, but Walpole had to count with parliamentary opposition which insisted, much against his inclinations, on his bringing off a spectacular success; while Fleury was face to face with the anti-Austrian traditions of which Chauvelin had become the ambitious spokesman. Since there was nowhere to be recognized any sovereign design, since no single aim seemed to dominate the others, everyone unanimously fell back on the waiting game. The Cardinal undoubtedly thought that Austria in her present humbled condition, no longer constituted a danger, but he did not yet think the time had come to bring about a regular *rapprochement*. The Spanish alliance was in the nature of things a development to be looked for, but the duplicity and instability of the Queen, Elizabeth Farnese, robbed the scheme of a good deal of its attractiveness. The lesser evil was to adhere to the *entente* with England, using the Spanish connection as a means of discouraging British infidelity. At last, by the treaties of Seville (1729) and Vienna (1731), Spain, by way of concluding these pourparlers, restored to the merchants of France, England and Holland the privileges which had been taken from them in favour of the subjects of the Emperor. On his side, the Emperor suppressed the Ostend Company and agreed that Spain should carry out in advance the military occupation of the Duchies of Parma and Tuscany promised to Don Carlos. As against this, the Powers, France alone excepted, recognized the order of succession established by Charles the Sixth in favour of his only daughter Maria Theresa. Alas, like his peace-making efforts



at home, his peace-making abroad had to be begun again, *de novo*. And, as in the one case, so in the other, Fleury was continually embarrassed by a circumambient atmosphere of suspicion and misunderstanding. Throughout the whole of his period of office, he encountered as much difficulty in defending the interests of France against the French themselves as against their most determined foes. Time and again, his work for the nation was rendered nugatory by the thoughtless vagaries of the public and the Court. The cream of his talents and his strength was squandered in making the best of evils for which he was in no way responsible.

On the morrow of the Treaty of Vienna, the elective King of Poland, Augustus the Second of Saxony, died suddenly (February, 1733), and an influential party at Versailles and Warsaw began to work for the restoration of the worthy Stanislas who had been ousted from the throne by the aforesaid Augustus. All manner of reasons were operating from the point of view of France to recommend this enterprise.

The politicians pointed out that France had always been in need of an ally who would be in a position to take Germany in the rear and flank. But Sweden, who had played this part in the seventeenth century, was now at grips with Russia whose power had been restored by the genius of Peter the Great, and was quite unable to carry it out. Now, therefore, was the opportunity to reverse the situation for the benefit of France. Moreover, it was generally felt by the great body of opinion that the King ought to support his father-in-law, not so much on account of the family connection, as by way of compliment to the French people, who had not been very flattered at having to acknowledge for their Queen a simple dowerless girl, with no country to call her own. By some, therefore, the war was urgently demanded, with the rest it was not unpopular. Fleury saw no alternative but to inflict its evils on the country, but he so played his cards as to give its aims and objects a more definitely French significance.

He allowed Stanislas to set out in secret for Poland, where the Diet chose him for their King by acclamation. Sixty thousand gentlemen on horseback, who had assembled together at the gates of Warsaw, had given their voices in his favour. But six thousand others, fools or traitors, withdrew across the Vistula and chose for their King the son of Augustus the Second, Augustus the Third, Elector of Saxony, the candidate supported by Russia, Austria and Prussia. A Russian Army arrived to support the Saxons; the parti-

sans of Stanislas melted away, and Stanislas himself was forced to take refuge in Dantzic, to which the Russians proceeded to lay siege. France could do but little for her candidate. It would have been sheer madness to send re-inforcements to him across the whole of Germany; and the appearance of a French fleet in the Baltic would have filled the maritime powers with the gravest apprehension. Fleury contented himself with dispatching a convoy of fifteen hundred men to Dantzic. They were mown down as they came ashore. Stanislas, forsaken by all, managed to get away under cover of a disguise. He himself has written the story of his escape; and we see, in his narrative, how he retained his coolness and his good humour to the very end.

The game being up as regards the Russians, France turned on the Austrians, their accomplices. It so happened that the Archduchess, Maria Theresa, had recently become affianced to Francis, Duke of Lorraine, who would succeed to the Imperial Crown on the death of Charles the Sixth. To snatch Lorraine away from the Hapsburgs was, in Fleury's view of the matter, the veritable object of the struggle. Having been assured that the French would make no attempt to occupy Belgium, England and Holland promised to observe neutrality. Being single-handed in their struggle against the combined forces of France, Spain and Piedmont, the Austrians were defeated in Germany and in Italy, in two swift campaigns, in which Berwick and Villars bore arms for the last time. Satisfied with these successes, Fleury hastened to make preliminary proposals for peace, which he took care to make so moderate in character as to discourage the formation of any fresh coalition against France. Then, as the beaten party, hoping to get back piecemeal what they had conceded in bulk, refused to comply with the demands of the victors, the Cardinal left Chauvelin to continue the negotiations, and he, with his skill, his arrogance and his ruthlessness compelled Charles to come to heel. By the Treaty of Vienna (November 18th, 1738), Francis ceded Lorraine to Stanislas, who was to retain it for himself during his lifetime. On his death, it was to come to France. In return for his concession, Francis was to get Tuscany, which till now had been settled on the Infante Don Carlos, while the latter was to become King of the Two Sicilies. The King of Sardinia added a few Milanese fortresses to Piedmont, and, at the other end of Europe, Augustus the Third was formally recognised as King of Poland.

It was long since France had won so much with so inconsiderable

an outlay. Lorraine, so often occupied, so greatly coveted, was at last to be united to France, which would henceforth form a compact block from Paris to Strasburg. By a happy conjunction of circumstances, the new regime would be inaugurated at Nancy, by the translation thither of a King of winning disposition, and under the suzerainty of a monarch who was at once a man of philosophic mind, of kindly disposition and artistic tastes. Truc, of all his royal appurtenances, Stanislas had nothing he could call his own save his benevolence and his royal abode, since the actual government was in the hands of Michel Chaumont de la Galaizière who, although officially betitled the Chancellor of Lorraine, was, none the less, managing director for the King of France. La Galaizière was too often heavy handed; but he was a man of knowledge and character, a distinguished administrator and a devoted public servant. Little by little, peace was consolidated, misunderstandings were dispelled. The people of Lorraine did not forget the dynasty which had held sway over them for seven hundred years, but they realized that the days of their independence were over and they gave themselves, without reservation, to the kingdom whose language they already spoke, and to which so many bonds even now united them. When Stanislas died in 1766, it was a native of Lorraine, the Duc de Choiseul, who, as minister of the King of France, proclaimed the union of the two countries.

But in the East also, Fleury took his revenge for the dispossession of Stanislas. Elated at the check administered to French influence in Poland, Austria and Russia had just launched an attack on Turkey, who barred the way to the Aegean and the Black Sea. Since the days of Francis the First, Turkey had played the part of a sort of colony to France. Thither the latter had sent her produce, and on the trade with the Ottoman, Marseilles depended for its prosperity. Knowing that the independence of Turkey was of even greater importance to France than the independence of Poland, the Sultan conceived the happy idea of entrusting the organization and training of his country's defensive forces to the French Ambassador, the Comte de Villeneuve, who was as valiant in the field as he was adroit in the council chamber, as competent a soldier as he was astute as a diplomatist. To the surprise of Europe, he contrived to keep the Austrian army at bay for three years, and by the peace of Belgrade in 1739, the Emperor was forced to hand back to the Sultan all the conquests which Prince Eugène had wrested from him twenty years before, that is to say, Servia, Wallachia, Orsova and

Belgrade. Next year, a Turco-Swedish convention did France the good turn of reconditioning the classic instrument of the Oriental diversion.

Never had France been more powerful or more widely respected. In alliance with the Bourbons of Spain and Naples, with Poland and Turkey, reconciled with the Emperor, strong enough to dispense with the help of England, she was, in the language of Frederick the Second, the arbitress of Europe. 'No neighbour,' adds Voltaire, 'had any complaint to make against her, and all the nations looked on her as their mediatress and advocate, as their common mother.'

This triumphant state of affairs did not last long. Four years later, in January, 1743, the Cardinal died, leaving France embroiled in a war as senseless as it was ruinous. He had been the first to recognize its uselessness and its danger, but he had got himself into the unfortunate position of having to support by force of arms, a policy of which he totally disapproved. A new fact introduced itself into the history of the monarchy; a revolution was accomplished which made the decisions of the sovereign subservient to the vagaries of public opinion, and that, in a domain in which his orders had never been called in question. Why, at this stage in her history, did France so grievously misconceive her own interests; and why, at this moment of all others, did Fleury and Louis the Fifteenth abandon each other? It was the dramatic climax of the reign. It was enacted not only in the King's closet, but in *salons* and gazettes, in books, and in the very streets. Properly to understand it demands an exact study of men and things, and, to begin with, a knowledge of the character of Louis the Fifteenth, which should go beyond the childish gossip with which students of the period have been too often obliged to content themselves.

## CHAPTER VI

### LOUIS THE FIFTEENTH

If you would appreciate to the full the loveliness of Versailles, you must wander there of an evening, when upon its façades, still warm to the touch, there yet linger the last rays of the setting sun. It is just ere it enshrouds itself in the gathering mists of twilight that the palace invests itself with its most subtle charm. Through the windows that look out on to the west there steal the soft gleams of the waning daylight that play caressingly upon the gilded ceilings; a soft rose-tinted light, already laden with the night's embalming charm, contests, inch by inch, the progress of the onward-stealing shadows. During the crowded hours, when groups of eager sight-seers fill the place with their chatter, the Château overawes the hordes of gaping simpletons with the majesty of its unexampled splendours. But when the people have all departed, when it is deserted and silent, then it is that it turns towards the crimson glow of the declining sun, a kindly and familiar visage. Through a door that stands ajar steals the light ticking of a clock. Versailles is living yet! Has His Majesty returned? Are the blue clad lackeys coming hither with their torches? No. This is the Versailles of the Regency. The King holds no Court here, now. Louis the Fifteenth is at the Tuileries. Only the Sunday crowds come to visit the dwelling of the Great King these days, and no one stays here unless it be, at long intervals, some foreign prince whose curiosity prompts him to spend the night beneath its roof.

Nevertheless, in 1722, the King did come back. For his personal convenience, some partitions were taken down, and one or two small rooms were constructed and fitted up for his private use. No very big undertakings, these! The great task was the completion of the Hercules salon which links up the State Apartments with the chapel. It was not until 1738 that Louis decided on having a private suite fitted up and furnished after his own tastes, a place more snug and comfortable than the stately quarters of his great-grandfather.

On the first floor, a suite of rooms built round the *Cour de Marbre* and the *Cour Royale* opened into the Council Chamber, opposite the *Galerie des Glaces*. It comprised a billiard room, wardrobes, a

wig cabinet, another cabinet for medals, another for enchased stones and lastly, almost at the end, the little gallery, decorated by Mignard, which led to the Escalier des Ambassadeurs. Little by little, Louis the Fifteenth took over the whole of this wing. First of all they put up a bedroom, a bathroom, a dining-room and a study. Then, in 1753, wishing to have one of his daughters near him, he had the staircase and the little gallery removed, and a small court, a bedchamber, an antechamber and two or three sitting-rooms put in their place. These were shortly afterwards assigned to Madame Adelaide. But in 1770, Louis the Fifteenth sent Madame Adelaide back to her sisters, on the ground floor, and incorporated her rooms with his own, in order to make up for those others which he had passed over to Madame du Barry. All these rooms are referred to by the chroniclers of the time as the 'cabinets'. To be invited there was the acme of every courtier's ambition. More intimate and more sequestered still were the *petits appartements* which M. de Nolhac has so cleverly identified on a floor above the cabinets. Few were they who visited them; fewer still those who have described them. Beneath the roof of the *Cour de Marbre* there nestle a gallery and a card room. Looking out on the three little inner courts which, on this side, link up the original brick Château of Louis the Thirteenth and the palace of stone and marble with which Louis the Fourteenth encompassed it, there lie, as though hidden away in a box, and shielded from observation by the steep declivity of the roofs, two or three stories, one above the other, of salons, galleries and corridors, a mysterious and complicated labyrinth, a honeycomb, that was for ever being remodelled, of low-ceiled rooms, staircases, recesses and passages, 'delightful nooks' according to those who had the *entrée* to them; 'rats' nests' for those who were denied it. In them the King kept his collection of maps, his tools, his books, his papers, his drawings, his preserves. Upon an upper terrace, invisible from without, a poultry-run, a dovecot, clusters of shrubs, and aviaries filled with rare birds, enframed a little garden-in-the-skies. The rooms on the first floor are lit by tall bay windows with small panes. The daylight comes flooding in, and sparkles on the pendent crystals of the lustres, endlessly reflected in the mirrors opposite. The white woodwork is engarlanded with little sprays of golden foliage, amid which, carved by the hand of Verberckt, gleam bunches of flowers and fruit, ribbons, arabesques and medallions and, amongst them all, little dimpled cherubs, trophies of war, of the chase, and of the lists of love. On the walls of the bedchamber hang a few pictures,

## LOUIS THE FIFTEENTH

the fine flower of the royal collections: Francis the First by Titian, a Rubens and a Vandyke. In winter, in the bright corner-room, the King has his big roll-top desk, and the walls are adorned with tapestry of crimson damask upon which other canvases are hung: the great 'Holy Family' by Raphael, Holbein's 'Erasmus'; pictures by Poussin, and a Veronese. On the upper floors, the decorative scheme is different. By way of contrast, Louis the Fifteenth desired them of a richness more subdued, more sedate, shades of delicate greys and greens with rarities in woods and marbles, but almost wholly innocent of gilding, with very quiet ornamentation, in keeping with the lowness of the ceilings. In the little dining-room hung the 'Déjeuner de Jambon' by Lancret, and J. F. de Troy's 'Déjeuner d'huîtres'. In the gallery were the quaint, exotic hunting scenes painted by Boucher, Troy, Carle Van Loo, Parrocel, Lancret and Pater, now in the museum at Amiens. The stillness, the subdued light, the difficulty of access – everything contributed to give these apartments the atmosphere of a far-off sequestered sanctuary, the dream-haven of some pensive *grand-seigneur* of delicate and sumptuous tastes. Day after day, in the bedchamber of Louis the Fourteenth, the King went through the elaborate ceremonial of the *lever* and the *coucher*. Every day he took at least one meal in public, alone, or with the Queen. In strict accordance with the calendar, the Court deployed about him all the details of its endless and monotonous magnificence. Monday: a concert; Tuesday: Comédie Française; Wednesday: Comédie Italienne; Thursday: a tragic drama; Friday, cards; Saturday: a concert; Sunday: cards. Twice a week, there was a ball at the Dauphin's or the Princesses'. On Wednesday, the Ambassadors' reception. On January 1st, the procession of the Knights of the Order. In May or June, a review of the French and Swiss Guards; in August a trip to Compiègne; in the autumn, hunting at Fontainebleau. The machine never stopped. Every year, on the same days and at the same hours, Louis the Fifteenth did what Louis the Fourteenth had been wont to do before him. But whereas Louis the Fourteenth used to put up with the inquisitive glances of the crowd without constraint, Louis the Fifteenth was obliged to brace himself for the effort, and the effort wearied him. This was one of the ulterior consequences of the upbringing he had received. Villeroy had tried to force him prematurely; the yoke had been too heavy for so young a neck. When he came to be his own master, Louis did not abolish the regal ceremonial, but what had been the breath of life to his grandfather, was but a sort of tedious

play-acting to him, a façade put up to conceal his real existence. 'You can sometimes see that he is longing to speak,' writes the Duc de Luynes, 'but shyness prevents him, and the words seem to die upon his lips. There is not the smallest doubt that he wants to say something friendly, and it ends in his asking some perfectly trivial question or other'. All of which makes the historian's task a difficult one. Stiff and silent in public, the King only unburdened himself freely and naturally to his intimates, but of these only two or three left any reminiscences behind them, and then, by a crowning piece of ill-luck, even these did not come to light and find their way into print, till the legend of Louis the Fifteenth, 'the indefinable and inscrutable', had already become stereotyped in the popular mind. Many things appeared mysterious which were mysterious only to the uninitiated. If Croy and Cheverny are not always infallible guides through the mazy windings of that royal abode, they have at least one advantage over the 'eye-witnesses' so often quoted, they had seen the things they relate and had eaten and drunk at the suppers they describe.

At thirty, Louis the Fifteenth still presented the appearance of a good-looking, pink and white young man. The great picture by Jean Baptiste Van Loo portrays him dressed in a general's uniform, wearing top-boots and breast-plate, his right hand resting on his bâton, his left on the pommel of his sword. He is obviously trying to look majestic. But the pose, the weapons, the military trappings, — all are belied by the femininity of the face. If there is nobility in the broad expanse of forehead, if the nose is sharply outlined, there is something soft, almost weak, about the lower part of his face. What constitutes the real charm of the picture, is the extreme gentleness of the expression, the long lashes, the soft velvety eyes that look so caressingly beneath the shapely lids tilted never so slightly towards the temples. But this appearance was deceptive, and some years later we find him presenting a far more virile aspect. The fullness had all gone, the features were more clearly marked, the cheeks were firm and inclined to hollowness under the prominent cheek bones, he had a determined jaw and a protruding chin. Nevertheless, there was no hint of hardness. Call to mind La Tour's pastel (1748), or Lemoyne's busts (1749 and 1750), the flashing look on his face, the accusing pucker of the brows, the restless mouth, the sensitive nostrils, — the whole face seems eloquent of a hunger for possession, of unrequited desire. The King was a handsome man, with a fine, virile rather sensuous cast of countenance which was not



without its effect on the fair sex. It may be that after a time his features came to betray the expression of a man accustomed to having his way with the women, a sort of domineering look, with a suspicion of vulgarity about it. The impression was fleeting, and probably false, for none of his contemporaries reports having noticed it, whereas a score of chroniclers agree in belauding the elegance, the fine manners, the nobility and perfect dignity of the King's demeanour.

Looked upon from his birth as one destined to fall an early prey to death, Louis the Fifteenth was overflowing with sap, with life and passion. Of fatigue, he did not so much as know the name. He was insensible to rain and cold. Immediately after dinner, about two o'clock in the afternoon, no matter what the weather, he stole out through the *Cour de Marbre* into the grounds. He hunted three or four times a week. The remaining days he went shooting in his park. He had three packs of hounds which were used in turn. Men and beasts might be beaten to a standstill, but he would still be thinking about the next day's meet.

'One day at Fontainebleau,' Dufort de Cheverny relates, 'the running had been particularly severe. They had started two stags. Dogs, horses and men were utterly done up and the party were soberly plodding along towards the carriages, when the King, with that husky voice of his which would have betrayed him among a thousand, called out to Lansmate (the huntsman):

"Lansmate, are the dogs tired?"

"Aye, Sire, they're done to the finish."

"And the horses, what about them?"

"Dead beat too, Sire!"

"All the same," the King went on, "I shall hunt the day after to-morrow. Do you hear, Lansmate? I shall hunt the day after to-morrow?"

"Yes, Sire, certainly, I hear you perfectly. But what gets me," he added, as he went away to join his men, "is that I am always being asked if the dogs and horses are tired, but nothing's ever said about the men!"

"That was said in such a way that the King should overhear every word. However, the hunt took place, as the King had commanded. Always feeling in good fettle himself, it never entered his head that others might not be feeling the same'.

As a matter of fact, his physical endurance was little short of miraculous. One Sunday in March, 1737, he drove to la Muette

where he had supper and went to bed. On the Monday, he hunted the whole day and went back to supper at Versailles. At midnight he started off by coach for Paris to go to a masked ball at the Opera. He stopped there until four in the morning and got back to Versailles at six. He heard Mass, flung himself down on his bed, and by eleven was in the saddle again to go stag hunting. The hunt over, he went to join the Queen, gave her an account of what he had been doing, went up into his private apartments, where he entertained thirty guests to supper and kept them with him till daylight, without showing the least sign of fatigue or the smallest need of sleep. Seventeen years later, on the February 1st, 1754, at Saint Germain, 'on a frozen road that made you tremble,' the Duc de Croy saw him mount three horses, one after another, and gallop each of them for a distance of three miles. He said he wanted 'to shake up his liver a bit'. It was absolutely necessary for him to do so, for if ever he went several days on end without exercise, he began to get symptoms of jaundice and rheumatism. What had begun as a habit had become a necessity.

Exercise and the open air kept him slim and agile. When he was twenty-seven, one of the things he liked to do was to go walking on the roofs, performing acrobatic tricks along the gutters and uttering savage yells down the chimneys in order to scare the guests at the Château. After which, accompanied by five or six dare-devils of his own age, he would go and tap at some window where he saw a light still burning, descend by a ladder and invite himself to supper. D'Argenson credits him with being fertile in the sort of imaginative device which enabled him to liven up some humdrum situation with a sudden and daring piece of inconsequence. Twenty years later, he was as fond of mischief as ever. Once, to show his friendship, he gave the Duc de Croy some terrific slaps on the back. Also, by way of being funny, he trod on the foot of a man who had recently had an attack of gout. The poor fellow felt such terrible pain that he left Versailles and would never come back again, though they petted and made a great fuss of him.

The King liked young people, but he hated fresh faces. To people he did not know, he never knew what to say, or how to open a conversation even with the ordinary polite nothings. When one of his usual companions had been away for several months, he could not bring himself to speak to him on his return. It was only after they had met three or four times, that he seemed to recognize him, and then he would be as kind and unaffected as he had previously

been cold and distant. In his private apartments, however, in the midst of his personal friends, he was always charming: 'Kind and chatty'; 'gay and affable'; 'a talker and a good one too'; writes Dufort de Cheverny. 'Cheerful and resolute'; 'talks a lot and very pleasantly'; 'very gay as a rule'; 'gentle, polished, gay, amiable, a great talker, and always expresses himself with skill wit and charm,' writes Croy.

The last mentioned witness, a most valuable one, has left us an account of several of those little suppers, at which, after the day's hunting, the King would gather some of his intimate friends about him – ladies as well as gentlemen. They usually sat down at table just as chance might direct, as though they were all equals, except that if they happened to be all men, the King would usually choose the two eldest to sit beside him. 'After we had gone upstairs, we waited, in the *petit salon* for supper to be announced. The King did not come in till it was time to sit down with the ladies. The dining-room was charming, the supper very pleasant, entirely without stiffness. There were only two or three *valets de garde-robe* to wait at table, and they always withdrew when everyone had got what he wanted in front of him. The whole thing seemed to me to be a combination of freedom and good form. The King was merry, easy but always with a hint of the grand manner that was never laid aside. He seemed to have lost all his shyness and was very much at ease. He talked a lot and he talked well; enjoying himself as, in those days, he thoroughly knew how. There were eighteen of us sitting at close quarters round the table. Starting on my right, and going all round, they were as follows: M. de Livry, Madame la Marquise de Pompadour, the King, Madame la Comtesse d'Estrades, the Duc d'Ayen, Madame de Brancas, the Comte de Noailles, M. de la Suze, the Comte de Coigny, the Comtesse d'Egmont, M. de Croix, the Marquis de Renel, the Duc de Fitz-James, the Duc de Broglie, the Prince de Turenne, M. de Crillon, M. de Voyer d'Argenson. The Maréchal de Saxe was also there but he did not sit down to table because he ate nothing after dinner, but he would pick up some tit-bits now and then, for he was extremely fond of food. The King, who always called him Comte de Saxe, seemed to like and respect him very much, and replied to what he said in a manner admirably frank and to the point. . . . They were two hours at table, and there was plenty of freedom but no licence. Afterwards, the King would go into the little saloon and there he would heat and pour out the coffee himself for there were no

servants about and everyone helped himself. The evening wound up with a game of *Comète*, played for very modest stakes' (January 30th, 1747).

Here is another instance: 'The King sent me word by the Maréchal d'Harcourt to go up at six o'clock, and we all had supper right up on the top floor in the little suite of rooms, in the greatest intimacy, there being only six of us with the King, viz: the King, the Maréchal d'Harcourt, M. de Fleury, myself, M. de Joyeuse, the son and the father of M. de Croissy. The King was delightful in these intimate surroundings, as easy and as courteous as could be. He talked quite a lot to me. Afterwards, in the little turret room, he lit a fire and made us all sit round him without the least distinction, and we chatted with the greatest familiarity, except that, of course, we could not forget we were with our Sovereign.' At ten o'clock, the Marquise de Pompadour, who had been to the *première* of a play of Crebillon's, came back in a carriage from Paris, and everyone withdrew (December 20th, 1748).

One might quote a score of passages like that, and de Croy's accounts are the more valuable seeing that he himself was the very opposite to a libertine. He was in fact a very steady officer, a religious-minded man, a good father, an excellent son and a faithful husband.

Never was there a man more easy to serve than Louis the Fifteenth. Even-tempered, never grumbling, he used to put up with all sorts of shortcomings and oversights without a word of complaint.

'He's feeling it more than I am,' he would say about the delinquent.

While he was still sleeping in Louis the Fourteenth's bedroom, he used to light his own fire when he woke in the morning, in order not to disturb anyone. 'We must let them sleep, poor souls,' he would say to the Duc de Luynes, 'I prevent them often enough.'

He was equally indulgent to his own personal entourage, the captain of the guard, the gentlemen of the household and the secretaries. Dufort de Cheverny, who was introducer of ambassadors, says this of him: 'I have often been more at home with him than with many other people I know. . . The kindness with which he treated me is written deep on my heart.'

All these young people full of boisterous life and mischief lived on terms of great familiarity with one another and Louis the Fifteenth put up with all their wild behaviour. The Marquis de Villepail, groom of the *Petite Ecurie* was very fond of teasing the young

Bontemps who was waiting till he was of age to fill the post of *valet de chambre* which his father had held before him. 'One day, at Versailles, Villepail was in attendance on the King in order to pull off his boots after the hunt. When the ceremony was over, the King rose and, passing through the room which was his regular sleeping apartment, went down to Madame de Pompadour's. As soon as he was gone, the place became the scene of some wild horse-play between Bontemps and Villepail. The latter had his *ex officio* whip in his hand and began to use it on Bontemps, but seeing Bontemps lay hold of the King's hunting-crop, he turned and rushed downstairs. Bontemps then took his stand behind the door of the King's bedroom, and, wrapping himself round with the door curtain, stood there armed with the hunting-crop. He had not been there playing the sentinel a quarter of an hour, when the King, who had an appointment with M. d'Argenson about some work they had to do, came hurriedly on the scene. The young madman of a Bontemps did not recognise the King's step, and suddenly flinging out of the door curtain, rushed forward brandishing his whip, and then stood like one petrified. The King, guessing how the land lay, took him by the ear and dragged him along for a yard or two. 'Sir, forgive me,' Bontemps exclaimed, 'Villepail has been giving it to me, and I thought it was he coming back again.' The King did not let go of him till he was tired of pulling him about and laughing. At Choisy, Luynes often saw him sit down by the waterside and chat familiarly with the boatmen and fishermen of the Seine. The only thing that made Louis the Fifteenth really angry was that anyone should ill-treat his animals. He had a white angora of enormous size. It was very gentle and affectionate and it used to come and lie on a cushion of crimson damask in the centre of the mantelpiece 'The King' to quote Dufort again, 'was due to come in at half-past twelve that night from the *petits appartements*. It was not yet twelve and Champcenetz, first *valet de chambre* said to us, 'Do you know I can make a cat dance for several minutes on end?' We laughed, and bet him he couldn't. Champcenetz thereupon took a flask from his pocket, stroked the cat and poured a lot of *eau de mille fleurs* over its four paws. . . . Then the cat went back and resumed its slumbers, and we thought we had won. All of a sudden, feeling the effect of the spirits of wine, it leapt down, emitting a series of alarming reports from behind, and ran about on the table cursing and swearing, skipping and prancing like a ballerina. In the middle of it all the King arrived like a bolt from the blue. "Gentlemen" he said,

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"what is going on here? Champcenetz, what have they been doing to my cat? I mean to get to the bottom of this." The question was a point blank one. Champcenetz hesitated a moment and then made a clean breast of the whole thing. We smiled and looked to see if the King was taking the thing in the same light. But his face was stern. "Gentlemen," he said, "I leave you here, but if you want to amuse yourselves, I am going to take care that it shan't be at the expense of my cat." That was said in such a tone of voice that no one has ever made the cat dance since.'

The question arises, was this easy-going nature of the King, as some have made out, the expression of a soft, indifferent and selfish nature equally incapable of feeling a deep emotion as of experiencing an unselfish sentiment? There is enough written evidence available to enable us to reply without any doubt that Louis the Fifteenth possessed a kind heart. The little notes which, long after his marriage, he still continued to send to Madame de Ventadour, are delicious in their simplicity and childlike tenderness. He wrote to his old governess as a child might have written to a beloved old grandmother: 'You know me thoroughly, *chère maman*. Well then, you won't be far out if you make up your mind that my gratitude to you will never be effaced from my heart, for, God be thanked, I have not got a heart like those people they tell us of. . . . I embrace you, *maman* with all my heart and long impatiently for the time when I shall be seeing you.'

For his children and his grandchildren, Louis had an affection that came out in a variety of different ways. If the Dauphin was the least little bit out of sorts, he couldn't sit still, but kept going down to see him ever so many times a day, stopped with him to keep him company and endeavoured to keep his mind off his illness. When he was nine, the child had an abscess of the jaw and the surgeons were obliged to lance the cheek twice over. The operation was very painful. When he heard the child scream, the King went so pale that they thought he was going to faint. When his eldest daughter, Madame Elisabeth, left Versailles in order to marry the Infante Don Phillip, the future Duke of Parma, Louis the Fifteenth went with her in the coach as far as Plessis-Piquet, kissed her over and over again, and gave her a hundred and one pieces of advice. He came back to Versailles with a drawn face, and dared not show himself to the Queen for fear of breaking down again (August, 1739). But in 1748, there was great joy. Madame Victoire who, for ten years past, had been at school at the Abbaye de Fontevrault,

came back to Court and Madame Elisabeth herself had leave to spend a few weeks with her parents. What a fuss they made of one another! Meals *en famille*, walks and drives, kisses, laughter, tears of affection and of joy—nothing was wanting to complete this picture of domestic bliss. The worthy Duc de Croy was deeply touched by it. 'We were at dessert,' he says, 'at the King's supper-table and saw a sight to warm the heart of every true Frenchman; it was the perfect, noble, unalloyed delight of the King at finding himself thus in the bosom of his family. And they were all just as pleased as he was. The Infanta was in the seventh heaven and got on especially well with the charming Madame Adelaide, both of them being full of life and gaiety. The Infanta had come back with a strong Gascon accent which, combined with her vivacity, was very pleasant to hear. In the salon, after supper, the King held them for a long time with his arms round them, looking at them with loving eyes and an affectionate air that was perfectly charming; from which it will be seen that the King was the best of fathers, the best of friends, and the most upright man you could meet with.' 'You could never believe how fond the King is of his children,' wrote Madame de Pompadour a couple of years later, 'and they are every bit as fond of him.' In 1752, Madame Henriette died. She was the twin sister of Madame Elisabeth. Her death plunged him into a terrible state of grief, which excited the pity of all who beheld it. And what an excellent grandfather he was! He had a conspicuous fondness for young people. He could play with them as if he were one of themselves and, indeed, there was a lot of the childlike left in his imagination. So he was the ideal grandpapa, adored by his grandchildren, joining in their games, sharing all their troubles. 'It is really quite touching,' said an eye witness, 'to see how the little folks pull him about and hug him, and to see how pleased he is.'

One day, the Dauphin, then a young man of twenty, came to see the King. Matters were serious, and this papa of his was a very imposing person. At last the young man took his courage in both hands and blurted out his trouble.

'I've something serious to tell you,' he stammered. 'I've got into debt. Here's a statement of what I owe. It amounts to 22,594 livres and 10 sols all told, and I haven't any money left. I want your help very badly.'

The King took the paper, looked at it, smiled a little, and was rather touched.

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'I'll get you out of this mess,' he said, 'and you shall have a little bit over into the bargain.'

With all the qualities that go to the making of a good father, a good home-keeping man of regular domesticated habits, Louis the Fifteenth was the worst of husbands and the most scandalous of princes. No doubt conjugal fidelity was out of date and many people in those days might have said, like Barbier, that in an age of extreme licence, 'it would have been absurd to insist on the King being worse off than his subjects'. And yet all that we have hitherto learned about him would lead us to imagine that Louis the Fifteenth, if anyone, was the man to prove himself an exception to the general rule. And when, even in the Court itself, we see families so thoroughly wrapped up in each other as those of the Comte de Toulouse, or the Duc de Luynes, the deplorable moral atmosphere of the times can hardly supply a sufficient explanation of the King's delinquencies. As a matter of fact, the drama is much more complicated than that, and Louis the Fifteenth did not succumb without a struggle nor without remorse.

The Queen was seven years older than her husband, and her ten confinements had not made her any younger. With her head enveloped in a sort of mantilla of black lace, she was always muffled up to the chin with shawls, ribbons, and tippets, and old-fashioned and rather ridiculous flummery which made her look like an old maiden lady from the country. She used to sing, accompanying herself on the harpsichord, and painted little very carefully finished pictures which she used to give as presents to her friends. Her apartments were full of medals, relics, religious pictures, and serious books, to which she would apply herself, often with more diligence than understanding. She presided over a little circle of stately folk, elderly and rather grim, great sticklers for etiquette and as dull as they were worthy. With her very sterling virtues, her piety, her kindness of heart, and a charity that did good by stealth, it did not dawn on Maria that her husband needed a gayer and more intimate existence; that he wanted some refuge where he could do as he liked and find himself at home among people of charm who would not be everlastingly scheming to secure the precedence and position to which they deemed their rank entitled them. Instead of a home, Louis the Fifteenth found, in his wife's circle, the most dismal portion of the whole Court. And so, in order that he might enjoy the society which his wife failed to gather about her, in order that he might bask in the atmosphere which she found it impossible to



create, he began to look about among his kinsfolk for the society he lacked. He sought it at Rambouillet, the abode of his *quasi* uncle, the Comte de Toulouse. He sought it at his own cousin's, Mademoiselle de Charolais, the Duc de Bourbon's daughter.

It was there that he fell in with Madame de Mailly. She was far from being a beauty, with her long nose, flat cheeks, big mouth, sharp eyes, skin brown rather than white, harsh voice, ungainly arms, and a walk like a grenadier's. But she was clever, modest, unselfish, well-made, and she knew how to dress. Brought up by Fleury in an atmosphere of religion, with a wholesome fear of women, Louis the Fifteenth was one of those men whom great feminine beauty fills with awe rather than excitement. As Madame de Mailly was not a person to inspire awe, as she was quite unpretentious and bore herself towards him like a good friend and no more, he was all the better pleased. When the decisive step was taken is not quite clear. It was sometime in 1732 or 1733, but the affair was wrapped in great mystery, and the majority of people had not the slightest inkling of it. Even then it was no definite liaison. There were many twinges of conscience on the part of the King, and many attempts to give up the entanglement. The King communicated at least once a year, at Easter, and religiously fulfilled all his obligations as a Catholic. Punctual and even meticulous in his observance of the Church's rule, never failing to keep the days of fasting and abstinence, he was perfectly well aware of the obligations which sincere repentance would involve. When the time for making his confession began to draw near, he seriously endeavoured to amend his life and made a genuine attempt to banish his mistress from his thoughts. He did not finally separate from the Queen until 1738, as the result of an incident which the Duc de Luynes reports at great length, having got it himself from his wife who was a friend and lady-in-waiting of the Queen's.

Marie was by temperament rather apathetic, and in no long time she had come to accept the marital attentions of Louis the Fifteenth merely as a matter of wifely duty. The quip attributed to her 'what, always the same old round, always in the family way, always being confined', is certainly apochryphal. Marie would never have permitted herself so undutiful a protest; but there is no doubt that there were times when she scarcely welcomed the King and she often complained that he came to her from his supper parties, with his brain excited and his breath reeking of champagne. In July, 1738, Louis being away at Compiègne, she informed him that she

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was pregnant, but in the course of a walk which she took to Saint Cloud and Montretout, she got over-tired and that same night suffered a mishap which showed that she was not going to have another child just then at any rate. She told the King about it, but what she had not the courage to add was that, for fear of complications, the surgeons had forbidden all conjugal relations for some time to come. When, on his return home, Louis made ready to pass the night with her, she refused him admittance. Offended at this ungracious treatment, he deemed that he was free henceforth to bestow his affections where he chose. Soon afterwards he made public his liaison with Madame de Mailly. He was then twenty-eight.

The amours of Louis the Fifteenth, which have proved a tempting bait to so many chroniclers, have at length found their true historian in M. de Nohac, and his books, in which insight and accuracy are so conspicuously combined, relieve us from the necessity of dwelling on a subject which he has so thoroughly illumined. Of his earlier mistresses, Mailly, Vintimille and Châteauroux, Vintimille was the one of whom he was the fondest. She had not her predecessor's kindness of heart nor the unerring taste and triumphant brilliance of her successor. 'She was ugly,' declares a contemporary witness, 'with the sort of ugliness that inspires fear rather than contempt. She was enormously tall, with a bold, brazen expression. She had a clever face, and clever she was, but her brains were just as she had received them from nature, unimproved by education or the acquisition of knowledge.' What the King liked in her was her independence, her frankness, her resolute and downright style. He liked to listen to her, set great store by her advice and treated her with every possible mark of consideration and esteem. For all this she was grateful to him, and gratitude awakened in her yet warmer sentiments which soon quickened into love. She was a woman altogether above the ordinary. Louis felt that she loved him, not from vanity, nor ambition, but for himself, his glory, and his greatness as a King. Always mistrustful of himself, he was won over by the virile energy of her intellect. Nevertheless, the *liaison* was not unattended by stormy outbreaks. One day, when she was in bed, her only response to his advances was a gesture of impatience, and Louis was so carried away by his wrath that he went the length of saying:

'I know well enough, Madame la Comtesse, what would cure you. What you want is to have your head cut off. That wouldn't suit you too badly, either, for you've got a pretty long neck. They would

drain off all your blood and give you lamb's blood instead, and that would do you good because you're so sour and spiteful.'

In September, 1741, Madame de Vintimille gave birth to a son, but after her confinement, her temperature, instead of subsiding, went up. The doctors held a consultation. They decided to bleed her. They carried out their intention and the patient fell into a doze. The King, who had hardly left her side for three days then withdrew. It was two o'clock in the morning. But at four o'clock, the fever getting higher than ever, Madame de Vintimille asked for a priest. She had just finished her confession when she fainted away, and was unable to receive the communion. However, she again recovered consciousness, only to be seized, almost immediately, with horrible convulsions. She died about seven.

Louis was still in bed, when La Peyronie, the surgeon, came to wake him. His first words were 'What news?'

'Bad, Sire,' said La Peyronie simply.

That he might weep unobserved, Louis the Fifteenth drew close the curtains of his bed. He heard Mass alone, refused to receive a soul, and, at nightfall, hiding his swollen eyes, he fled to Saint Leger with the Comtesse de Toulouse, and the dead woman's sister and friends. No hunting, no card-playing for him. He spoke of nothing but her and her melancholy end. 'When he came back again to Versailles he remained for weeks and months, sombre and abstracted. He kept on interposing in the general talk with themes of woe and words of penitence and expiation', visibly devoured by religious remorse and the fear that he had aided in the damnation of the woman he loved. 'There seems to be a great conflict going on in the King's mind,' said the scrupulous Luynes. It was long before the grief of Louis the Fifteenth wore to an end, and if thereafter he suffered himself to be ensnared by the advances of Madame de Châteauroux, it was because she reminded him, in many of her ways, of the character and enterprising spirit of Madame de Vintimille. 'You are killing me, Madame,' he said to her. 'All the better, Sire,' she made reply. 'It is meet that a King should rise from the tomb.' She inspired him with manly resolutions. In 1744, she went with him to join the army. She was with him at Metz in the month of August, when he was taken ill, and she duly played her part in the drama that was enacted around his bed; a sordid drama well-calculated to disgust one with one's fellow men.

Louis the Fifteenth, racked with fever, was growing weaker every day. The doctors were sending alarming bulletins to Versailles,

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People began to speak in whispers about Confession and the Sacraments. But Confession would mean repentance, the promise to amend, the dismissal of the favourite. Madame de Châteauroux and Richelieu kept unceasing watch beside the King; not for an instant was he left alone; not a word of misgiving was allowed to reach his ears; his illness was nothing serious, he would pull through all right, it was only a matter of a few days, and so on. But no Sacraments! Not for the world! In the ante-chamber, there was such a crowd of people you couldn't have got a pin between them. The opposition party, with long faces and downcast eyes, kept count of the fomentations, the clysters and the bleedings. They besieged the doctors, pushed the domestics hither and thither, and watched for the confessor, making believe to stifle their groans. The news is whispered from ear to ear. 'Père Perusseau has had a long interview with Madame de Châteauroux and she has come away in a state of desperation. The Duc de la Rochefoucauld, Grand Master of the Wardrobe, is going to claim, on behalf of the chief courtiers, the right of entry to the sick-room, which Madame de Châteauroux has denied them.' The Comte de Clermont had taken it upon himself to make his way into the King's room and had told His Majesty that he did not believe it was his intention to deprive the Princes of the Blood and the High Officers of the Court, of the satisfaction of coming and seeing for themselves how he fared. The King gave his assent to the resumption of the usual practice. Madame de Châteauroux was beside him at the time. Taking her hand in his, he imprinted a kiss upon it; but immediately added, 'Ah, Princess, I fear I am doing ill'. And, then, as she bent over him to embrace him, he thrust her away, saying in a low voice 'Perhaps we shall have to separate.' On the 14th, the pious party carried the position. The King lost consciousness and had been heard to sigh 'I am dying'. So Madame de Châteauroux is going at last. To-night His Majesty will receive the Sacraments. To-morrow, Extreme Unction.

While the wooden gallery which linked their quarters to the King's was being pulled down, Madame de Châteauroux and her latest *collaboratrice*, Madame de Lauraguais, took their seats in a coach bearing the coat-of-arms of M. de Belle-Isle and, with drawn blinds and veiled faces, fled the town, pursued by shouts of execration. In every village through which they passed, the jeering broke out anew. At la Ferté-sous-Jouarre, the people threw stones at them and they barely escaped with their lives. While all this was going on, the Queen, almost demented with anxiety, is hurriedly retracing,

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in the opposite direction, the road she had travelled as a bride. At every successive stage messengers bring her such ill tidings that she gives herself no time to halt on the way. At Vitry, a letter informs her that the King is asking for her. All along the route the peasants hasten in crowds to see her pass, to wish her well, to shower on her their prayers and protestations of love. At last, on Monday, the 17th, at eleven o'clock at night, the Queen arrived. She went straight up to the sick room. The King saw her, recognized her, embraced her and asked her pardon. Stayed by a miracle at the very gates of death, he seemed like one already detached from this world and preoccupied solely with the thoughts of saving his soul.

Louis the Fifteenth's repentance was sincere and it might have been permanent. But, on the 13th and 14th, when the doctors were only giving the King two more days to live, the religious party displayed less anxiety about the welfare of the King's soul than about giving an object lesson in ecclesiastical supremacy by displaying to the people and the Dauphin a picture of a repentant King bowed low in humiliation beneath the priestly hand.

The senior Chaplain, the Duc de Fitz-James, Bishop of Soissons was a man of thirty-five, son of the Maréchal de Berwick, an ambitious and haughty lord, late to enter the Church and more suited to do battle with the foe than to perform deeds of mercy and compassion. He imposed on the King a public confession and a kind of apology or *amende honorable*, couched in the most humiliating terms. The Court, the officers, the burgesses of Metz, as distinct from the common people, were permitted to be present. Before them, the King asked pardon of his people for the scandal he had given them; he confessed that he was unworthy to bear the name of Most Christian King, and Eldest Son of the Church. Finally, he declared that he submitted wholly to the orders of M. de Soissons, which demanded the dismissal of the two sisters. Fitz-James saw to it that the words of Louis the Fifteenth were immediately copied out and disseminated throughout the Kingdom, to be read from the pulpit of every Parish Church in the land. Lastly, despite the instructions of the King, who commanded that the Dauphin should not proceed further than Chalons, his guardian, the too zealous Chatillon, brought him right on to Metz with the unseemly haste of an heir spurring joyfully to put his father in the grave. But the King did not die, and after a few very bad nights, began to recover with a rapidity that filled the doctors with amazement. Thereupon, the judicious Barbier wrote the following entry in his diary: 'The action of my Lord Bishop of

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Soissons is looked on as a very great piece of work. People say that since the scandal was public, so ought the reparation to be. Already they are for making him Cardinal Archbishop of Paris. The public often admire these great events without pondering on them very deeply. For my own part, I venture to look on this affair as very unbecoming, and this public and sudden reparation as an indubitable scandal. The King's reputation should be carefully guarded. He should be brought to die religiously but also with the dignity that befits a King. What is the use of all this ecclesiastical parade? It was enough that the King was inwardly moved by sincere repentance for the things he had done. There was no need to proclaim it to the world. It was very right that Madame de Châteauroux should disappear from the scene, but her departure should have been arranged with some address; some sort of pretext should have been found to account for the leave-taking of the Princesses and their women, who, it might have been said that of course they had no longer any reason for staying on at Metz, seeing that the Queen would soon be there; and not, by a sudden sentence of exile, to give open publicity to an intrigue which followed the Madame de Mailly affair, and of which, if the truth were told, the public could only have had suspicions. I haven't the least idea what will happen when he has been well for three months, but I think this way of going on is thoughtless and imprudent, and much more gratifying to the ecclesiastical authorities than to a prince at a critical moment in his career.'

From the line taken by this worthy bourgeois, we may guess how the King himself felt about it all. Never did he forget what he himself called 'the Metz performances'. The public confession, the arrival of the Dauphin, Chatillon as *Maire du Palais*, the declarations read by the parish priests – the whole thing remained engraven on his memory as something at once disgraceful and absurd. The good Queen was a stranger to all these intrigues, but the pious party had upheld her cause with too much vehemence, they had bewailed her fate with too much ostentation, they were too obviously and flamboyantly her friends, for her not to be compromised by their indiscreet and clumsy intervention. There were whisperings abroad that the King was going to resume conjugal relations, that, by way of preparation for that happy event, Madame de Luynes had had another pillow put in the Queen's bed, that Marie, though she was well over forty, was learning the use of powder and paint. . . . All this tittle-tattle was reported to Louis the Fifteenth with the kind of

embellishments best calculated to stir his bile. Were people always going to do what they liked with him? Were these church people going to lord it over him and dictate to him in his very bedroom? While the populace were in a state of wild enthusiasm about the 'Well Beloved', while cheering crowds and reiterated *Te Deums* acclaimed his restoration to health, Louis retreated behind a rampart of suspicion, misgiving and remorse. He went off on a visit to his father-in-law at Luneville, stayed a few days in Strasburg, suddenly made up his mind to go and join the troops and put himself in command of the forces that were laying siege to Friburg. Two months went by; but by the time he returned to Paris his mind was made up. Chatillon and La Rochefoucauld were banished to their estates, Fitz-James was relegated to his Bishopric and forbidden to leave it. One night in November, however, someone scratched at the Queen's door. Was it the King? Marie did not open it. Ten days later, Mesdames de Châteauroux and de Lauraguais were recalled. It was a short-lived triumph for the favourite. She died almost immediately afterwards, from congestion of the lungs.

Very soon the Queen had begun to feel that Louis was slipping away from her again. It caused her grief, but she was approaching the placid time of life, and for years now she had accustomed herself to a peaceful, untroubled existence, in which the King had come to occupy a very small place indeed. Not having any influence, she was the storm-centre of no ambitions. A harmless little circle, a little group of loyal and warm-hearted friends, with never a trace of heart-burning, a little band in which the aim of each was to live on good terms with the others – such was the society in which she passed her days. The great man of the fraternity was President Hénault, a clever, well-read personage, an easy and witty conversationalist. With him, there were Moncrif the poet, the Duc de Luynes, his wife, his brother the bishop, Madame de Mirepoix, de La Mothe, the Chevalier d'Honneur, the Comte d'Argenson before his downfall. They called each other by little terms of endearment, pet names. Madame de Villars was nicknamed Papète, the Duchesse de Luynes was known as the Hen; d'Argenson as the Youngster. They were not in the least sanctimonious; the Queen herself was not. Occasionally she would let them tell her some very mild and inoffensive impropriety. One day, the bishop dropped off to sleep in the middle of a conversation and began to snore like a humming top. Suddenly he woke with a start and said 'We must call a meeting of the Chapter.' As this remark was completely inappropriate, his

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unfortunate shot was a subject for mirth for a whole month. But it was not every day that startling things like that occurred. For the uneventful times there was always cookery and kindnesses. The Queen ate with an unflagging and unflurried appetite. Now and then she would give herself indigestion. That was an excuse for taking medicine, and it all helped to pass away the time. But, in addition to religious devotions and pious observances which made up the fine flower of this life of theirs, there was work to be done for the poor, the secret distribution of alms which knew no limit, and for which not only superfluities but necessities as well were done without.

The King took to himself a new mistress, a certain Madame Le Normant d'Etiolles, *née* Poisson. It was given out that he met her at a masked ball, that she was twenty-four years of age and that she was very pretty. Her father had been a clerk in the employ of the Pârises and had now got a berth in the Commissariat. He was a hard-working man, common, and blunt in his manner of speaking. The mother had not seen much society, but she was no fool, and thought her daughter was going to do wonders. The daughter's husband was a queer little midget of a fellow, very quick in the uptake, popular with his companions, and the nephew of a farmer-general. Subsequently the story got about that old Poisson had nearly got himself hanged for robbery, and that Madame Poisson had been very liberal in her favours to Pâris-Marmontel. For the moment, the only thing known for certain was that it was the uncle Le Normant who had made the marriage. He found the money to have the young woman educated at the Ursuline Convent at Poissy, and had settled money on the bridegroom and kept a friendly eye on the new establishment. But the Court soon got to know further particulars. Madame d'Etiolles was very well known, it seems, in the dubious world of faded coquettes, literary lions and financiers. She had supped at Madame de Tencin's with Marivaux, Duclos, Piron and Montesquieu; she had won over Madame Geoffrin with her delicate compliments; she had corresponded with Voltaire, she 'had philosophical leanings', that is to say, religion was not her most conspicuous characteristic; finally, and this was the crowning discovery, she was somehow connected with Binet, who introduced her one day into the King's private apartments and presented her to Louis the Fifteenth. She was anxious, we are given to understand, to solicit a berth for her husband as a farmer-general.

And now a fresh blunder on the part of the pictists, brought the scandal to a head. The Dauphin's tutor, Boyer, Bishop of Mirepoix,



whose business it was to allot preferments, had taken charge of the party after Chatillon's banishment. He was not wanting in intelligence or determination, but his intelligence was short-ranged and his determination pig-headed. Without very carefully weighing his words, he trounced Binet, reproached him for bringing Madame d'Etiolles to Versailles, and threatened him with all sorts of mysterious penalties. Binet, thinking his position was insecure, hurried away to tell the King that people were trying to put a spoke into his love-affairs. Now, Louis the Fifteenth may have been timid, but nothing was better calculated to enrage him and goad him into action, than an attempt to keep him in leading-strings. So it came about that, in this month of April, 1745, Madame d'Etiolles almost lived at the Palace. She was destined to return thither for good and all after Fontenoy, as Marquise de Pompadour and the King's official mistress.

Nattier, Boucher, Carle Van Loo, La Tour, Cochin, Drouais, Lemoyne, Pigalle have all portrayed Madame de Pompadour on canvas or in marble, but her brother, Marigny, often used to say that none of the busts or the portraits were first-rate likenesses and that all this profusion of masterpieces was bewildering rather than enlightening. How far more valuable, from the historian's point of view, is a certain passage written by a first-hand observer, a man of moderate talents it is true, but, nevertheless, one who knew how to take things in and to describe what he saw; I refer to Le Roy, the Lieutenant of the Royal Hunt at Versailles. 'The Marquise de Pompadour,' according to this gentleman, 'was rather above the middle height, slim, graceful, lissome and elegant; her face was quite in keeping with her figure and was a perfect oval; beautiful hair, light auburn rather than gold, rather big eyes with eyebrows of the same colour, a perfect nose, a charming mouth, lovely teeth and the most delicious smile. The most beautiful skin in the world set off all her attractions to the greatest advantage. Her eyes had an indefinable charm, which they may have possibly have owed to their uncertain colouring. They had not the glittering brilliance of black eyes, nor the tender languor of blue, nor the soft delicacy of grey. Their indeterminate hue seemed to endow them with every kind of seductiveness and successively to express all the emotions of her mobile spirit. Thus the countenance of the Marquise de Pompadour was the scene of infinitely varied shades of expression, yet never did her countenance betray anything but the completest harmony. All was subordinated to one end, which postulates no

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small measure of self-control. In all her actions she was indeed the very 'poetry of motion', and she seemed to have reached that mysterious borderline where mere human elegance appears to take wing and soar to the regions of the divine. The utmost care had been bestowed upon her education so far as the outward graces were concerned, and she was perfect from every point of view except the moral one. All the talents were hers, all the gifts and all the graces. She sang and danced and played the harpsichord, she acted, painted and engraved without giving herself the smallest airs, and all with perfect gaiety and good humour.

Her enemies used to call her a *grisette*, a flighty shop-girl. That was mere Court jealousy. She was, in fact, a bourgeoisie, a flower of the Rialto, the prettiest woman in Paris, but with a sensibility far removed from the starch, unbending air of the ambitious great-lady. She loved the King for his own sake, as being the finest man in the kingdom, and the most lovable. She loved him sentimentally, and if not with a profound passion, at least with sincere affection. Sainte-Beuve had a keen eye; he said that even into the brilliant scandal of her royal liaison she brought something of her homely, middle-class sentiments, the affections and tastes of ordinary domestic life. She was a marvel at running a house, presiding over a dinner-table and charming away the boredom of an empty day. She possessed the art of kindling wit in her friends, and her guests always used to depart on excellent terms with themselves. Gontaut and Bernis put the finishing touches on her pronunciation and mode of speech, and instructed her in the traditional manners and customs of Court behaviour. She got to know all about genealogies, pedigrees, the various ranks of nobility, ceremonial and etiquette. But this second education never made her forget the solid advantages of the first. In her apartments, Louis the Fifteenth found what he had long sought and sought in vain; he found a few square feet where he could really unbend and feel at his ease. If the word be not too virtuously domestic in its implications, we might say that Madame de Pompadour's abode was for him a home. At least it was a refuge where peace and quiet awaited him, and good humour, and loyal, unwavering friendship.

The previous favourites, had gone out of their way to offend the Queen by their insolence or affected airs of homage. Madame de Pompadour had no powerful clique behind her; no influential family connections. Her aim was not to dominate, but to disarm unfriendly prejudice. By her constant deference, her kindness, her

delicate tactfulness she succeeded in winning the tolerance of the Queen and her entourage. 'Since there must be one,' said Marie, 'better this one than another.' Furthermore, acting on his mistress's advice, the King treated his wife with greater consideration. He paid her more attention in public, he greeted her of a morning with words of affection, and relieved her of great anxiety by paying off the debts, amounting to some forty thousand crowns, in which her deeds of charity had involved her.

Of all the various posts about the Court, Madame de Pompadour took charge of the only one that was vacant; she became Secretary of State for Pleasure. No one could amuse the King as she could. There was never a journey, or a supper-party, or a friendly gathering without her. She organized private theatricals, and her performances in Molière's plays and Lulli's operas won her immense applause. She purchased, or built, little châteaux, and personally took charge of all the details of their furnishing, in order to give the King a pleasant surprise when he saw them. There was Montretout, for example, and Crécy, La Celle, les Hermitages, Bellevue, Ménars. But these gew-gaws were a costly item, for the foremost artists of the day were set to work on them. At Bellevue, Verberckt and Rousseau were responsible for the wood-carving, Boucher decorated the gallery, Oudry, the dining-room, Carle Van Loo, the chief reception room. Statues by Falconet and Pigalle adorned the entrance hall and the park. But then all these marvels would revert, in due course, to the Crown. The Marquise may have spent a lot, but it was not on herself. She grew no richer. In her last years, when her monthly pension had been reduced to three thousand livres, she had to sell some of her jewels in order to keep free of debt, and when she died, all they found in her apartments, in the way of cash, was thirty-seven louis in a writing-table drawer. However, she always kept strict note of what she received and what she spent. That was in the blood. She kept accounts like any well-to-do and methodical housewife and, so far from looking on herself as a spendthrift, she took pride in the various things she had picked up at bargain-prices and stored in houses which, in due course, would be given back or bequeathed to the King. After all, what better way could there be of encouraging art, than giving work to artists? Weavers, painters, sculptors, cabinet-makers, marblers, moulders, architects and gardeners would all bequeath her memory to posterity. And if the Revolution came and ransacked, dispersed or destroyed the treasures she had collected, can we, in fairness, cast the blame on her?

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Madame de Pompadour was the King's mistress for five years, from 1745-1750. She remained his friend for fourteen, until her death on April 15th, 1764. But the 'drive' at Court was unceasing and gave her no rest. In a few seasons it had exhausted her nerves and ruined her fragile charms. She was consumptive and, almost from the beginning, she had been liable to attacks of blood-spitting; but, until the Peace of Aix-la Chapelle, and while the King was away on campaign, she had been able to enjoy some periods of repose and to live in the open air. But when, at last, Louis came home for good, she became the slave of her own unstable grandeur, of her own amazing success, which drew upon her unending shafts of envy, hatred and treachery. She defended herself with sleepless energy, her mind was always on the rack, she was for ever fighting against intrigues and countering plots and conspiracies. 'It's terrible, the life I lead,' she wrote in 1749, to Madame de Lutzelbourg. 'I've scarcely a minute to myself. Rehearsals and performances, and, twice a week, without a break, journeys now to the Petit Château, now to la Muette. Then there are the Court duties, as trying as they are indispensable - Queen, Dauphin, Dauphine, three daughters, two Infantas! Just ask yourself whether it gives you a moment to breathe. Pity me, and don't be too hard on me.' Next year, she wrote thus to her brother: 'Except for the pleasure of being with the King, which certainly makes amends for everything, the rest is only a wilderness of worry and boredom and all the miseries that flesh is heir to.' The struggle was more than she could stand. As far back as 1748, seeing her without her 'make-up,' d'Argenson was amazed to perceive how old she was looking; how flabby and unhealthy her appearance. She was for ever complaining of chills, coughs, interminable colds, attacks of breathlessness which made her incapable of any sustained exertion. To overcome her weariness and attacks of 'nerves', she was always taking some nostrum or other in the shape of draughts, pills, herbal irritants, aphrodisiacs. She squandered her strength in vain. Between the King and herself there now remained no other bond save friendship; but that, being wrought of mutual confidence and esteem, was indestructible.

From this time forward Louis the Fifteenth dispensed with a mistress *en titre*. Women of high station offered themselves without compunction, but these were only transitory affairs. His Majesty would take his pleasure elsewhere than at Court, in a sequestered abode, within the *Parc aux Cerfs*. *Le Parc aux Cerfs* - what a mass of ridiculous balderdash the mere mention of that name calls up! People

picture to themselves a sort of Scraglio on the Oriental model, an immense park with secluded groves, flower-sprinkled lawns and a whole troop of innocent does pursued by a libidinous monarch. What a brave opportunity for the historian to parade the magnificence of his uncompromising virtue! But as a matter of fact, when it is shorn of its embroideries, when you have deducted all the factitious indignation of which it has been the target, the thing does not amount to much. The *Parc aux Cerfs* was a part of Versailles built on the site of one of Louis the Thirteenth's hunting boxes. Louis the Fifteenth had a house there, which it is now impossible to identify. It was, if you like, a sort of *garconnière*, a kind of bachelor's establishment where he received and gave hospitality to young women of easy virtue. We know about some of the boarders. They had not been dragged there against their will. Most of them had served their apprenticeship in their own families; such, for example, as that Morphise, whose four sisters, after tramping about in the wake of the army, were taken over by some habitués of the stews, gentlemen very far from being in their first youth. No doubt this does not excuse the King, and all this trafficking was entirely ignoble. But to pretend that Louis the Fifteenth was the only man who had relations with young women willing to barter their charms for hard cash is a piece of rather conspicuous hypocrisy from which we beg leave to dissociate ourselves.

These clandestine *liaisons* satisfied the imperious instincts of the King, without compromising either his head or his heart. Precisely at this date, Madame de Pompadour was leaving the quarters which, as the King's mistress, she had occupied on the second floor at Versailles and was settling herself in on the ground floor, hitherto assigned exclusively to the Princes of the Blood Royal. In 1750, what had formerly been the apartments of the Comte de Toulouse, overlooking the north flower garden, were fitted up for her. Two years later, she was created a Duchess, and enjoyed all the honours appertaining to that rank. She was thus put on an equal footing with the wives of Dukes and Peers. Without attempting to influence the King's feelings to her own advantage, she steadfastly fulfilled her role of confidante, counsellor and friend. Far from attempting to monopolise him as she had formerly done, she strove to re-unite him to his children, urged him to live with his family and was more than ever attentive to the Dauphin. With the Queen's goodwill already assured her, she came in the end to be on good terms with the whole of the Royal Family. She even grew a little devout, read



LOUIS XV AT THE AGE OF 6 YEARS  
*from a portrait by Rigaud*

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improving books, went to Mass and began to look about for a confessor who would consent to condone her past conduct and, at the same time, permit her to live in close proximity to the King. 'She's taking a leaf out of Madame de Maintenon's book' wrote a perspicacious observer. And that was true. It was her ambition, as it had been Madame de Maintenon's, to associate her name with some charitable establishment in aid of the poorer nobility, on the model of Saint-Cyr. Most important of all, she realized what other people failed to see, how greatly Louis the Fifteenth worried over affairs of State. She knew that, in spite of his cold and taciturn exterior, he needed someone to whom he could confide his troubles, and talk about his plans, his misgivings, his disappointments. He had his fits of depression and foreboding, which his dissipations did not avail to cure, and which nothing but a woman's affection could dispel. And it was in that sphere, that she again rendered herself indispensable.

On January 5th, 1757, the Court was at Trianon. But in the afternoon, the King had come back to Versailles to be company for one of his daughters, Madame Victoire, who was indisposed and confined to her room. His carriages had been waiting for him since half-past five, at the far end of the Cour de Marbre. At six o'clock, he left his apartments, came down the little staircase and went out through the guard-room underneath his corner study. Some torch bearers walked in front. Behind the King came the Dauphin and the Duc de Richelieu, first gentleman-in-waiting for that year, and behind him again, the Duc d'Ayen. As usual the King's bodyguard was drawn up in two lines, from the door right down to the coach. Suddenly, out of the darkness, a man sprang forward, shoved aside two of the soldiers and reached the King. He struck at him with all his might and then darted back again through the gap he had made, his hat on his head. 'Duc d'Ayen,' said the King, 'someone has just struck me with his fist!' He put his hand to his right side and drew it back again all covered with blood. 'I am wounded, and that is the man who struck me, that man there!' An equerry, a footman, the Dauphin and some of the soldiers flung themselves on the man, who made no attempt to get away. 'Keep hold of him, but don't kill him,' said the King. Then waving aside the Duc d'Ayen, who was proffering his assistance he said, 'No; I can manage to get upstairs again.' Still quite calm, he did, in fact, succeed in getting up the little staircase. As soon as he was back in his room it was found he was losing a lot of blood. He began to feel

faint and said he thought he was done for. 'I shan't get over it,' he said, and kept on asking for a priest and a surgeon.

The staff being at Trianon, there were no footmen, no linen, no sheets on the bed. They laid him down on his mattress and covered him up with a dressing-gown. They managed to get his clothes off him, and did what they could to staunch the wound. The King hurriedly made his confession to a chaplain and immediately afterwards, fainted away. At last La Martinière, the surgeon-in-chief, and, with him, Senac, the senior physician, arrived on the scene. The King had been struck between the fourth and fifth ribs. The would-be assassin had used a Namur knife, that is, a knife with an ordinary blade on one side, and a pen-knife blade on the other. He had struck his blow with the latter, and the King, luckily for him, being very warmly clad, the several layers of clothing had deadened and diverted the blow. La Martinière probed the wound; no organ had been touched, nor were there any signs of sepsis. About midnight, after changing the dressing, he was able to announce that it would only be a matter of a few days' feverishness and weakness, and that the wound would heal quite normally, and without any complications. But the King's illness was mental rather than physical. There, in his bed, curtained off from the world, he lay, a prey to his own reflections. When someone remarked to him that his wound was not a deep one, he replied, 'It is deeper than you think, it has gone to my heart.' His assailant, Damiens, was merely an isolated fanatic. He denied that he had any accomplices, and the judges could discover no traces of a conspiracy. Damiens was a magistrate's servant . . . He must have overheard a good many conversations, and what he heard seems to have turned his head. Where was the country going to? Thirteen years ago, at Metz, the King had made a solemn promise to God that he would reform his way of life? But then Madame de Pompadour was only the King's friend, these days. Whom was he to believe? What was he to do? And among all these counsellors, was there a single one who was truly sincere and disinterested? And then Metz would persist in rising up before him again, the public humiliation, the shameful flight of Madame de Châteauroux.

The King got about again. He received the Ambassadors, the Court and the deputations that came from all parts of the country. Still he remained gloomy and taciturn. 'At last, one day,' we are told by Dufort de Cheverny, 'it was nearly two o'clock, and the apartment was almost empty. The King had on his dressing-gown



and his night cap and carried a stick, leaning on it lightly. Sometimes he would take a glance out of the window; sometimes he would stop, and stand lost in thought. The Dauphin, to whom the King made no sign of dismissal was chatting with the Marquis du Muy; the Dauphine could not summon up courage to take her leave. The King, being at length assured that everyone was at dinner, gave the Dauphine the signal to depart. She came forward, made the customary obeisance and went away. She was attended by several ladies, among them the Duchesse de Brancas, a friend of Madame de Pompadour's. The King said to Madame de Brancas, "Give me your cloak." She took it off and gave it him. With a bow to her, he put it round his shoulders, took a turn in silence about the room and went out. He turned in the direction of the inner apartments, and the Dauphin, who was accustomed to go with him, took a few steps in the same direction. He had not got half way across the room, when the King turned round. "Don't you come," he said. The Dauphin obeyed and at once returned to his own apartment for dinner. The King came back again between three and four o'clock. You wouldn't have thought he was the same man. He had gone away looking gloomy and stern. Now he seemed quite easy in his mind and had a most agreeable look on his face. A smile played about his lips, and he chatted away without a shadow of ill-humour. He had something to say to every one of us, made one or two jocular remarks about the cloak he had on, and left us saying that he was going to dine, and urged us to do the same. He came back, and it was quite easy to guess that he had been to pay a visit to Madame de Pompadour. Just this one conversation with a friend who was more interested in his welfare than anyone else in the Kingdom, had soothed his troubled spirit, which was more in need of comfort than his body.'

Louis the Fifteenth had suffered deeply. 'He was afraid,' said the same witness, 'that he had forfeited the affections of his people.' He was often tortured by that idea. Then he would question himself and ask whether he had fulfilled his duties as a King, and whether, when his last hour came, he would be able to meet God without trembling. He was too religiously minded not to bethink himself of the Last Judgment, not to fear Eternal Punishment. No doubt he often told himself that the merits of Saint Louis must surely extend to all his descendants and that, through his prayers, much would be forgiven him. Nevertheless the sight of death would send him off into a fit of black melancholy and disturb him to such an extent

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that he would be incapable of saying anything for hours. One day, a huntsman was drowned before his very eyes. He stopped the hunt, turned his horse about, regained his carriage and, greatly upset, went back to Versailles without a word. On his first visit to Rambouillet, after the death of the Comte de Toulouse, the Princess, overwhelmed with grief, broke down and wept when she saw him. And for a long time, he stood quite motionless, unable to utter a word.

The Duc de Luynes reports that on that occasion he heard him say several times that he was no person to comfort people, because he himself was so completely prostrated when he saw people overwhelmed by any great sorrow. When, by sheer force of will, he managed to overcome his dumbness, he could not even then shake off the funereal ideas that were obsessing him. His talk would continually turn on dissecting dead bodies, on diseases, burials and cemeteries. Being a considerable adept in medicine, he made use of technical terms and piled on anatomical details with a kind of unholy frenzy, which was really the echo of his inward remorse. He would often begin some request or other with the words 'When I come to die'. And when his listeners attempted some deprecatory remark he would say, in a tone that riveted them to the spot, 'Well, but it has got to come hasn't it?'

Even when his anxieties were at their blackest, Louis might well have found some solace in the reflection that his intentions had been good. He had the welfare of the country at heart, and he possessed most of the qualities which go to the making of a great king. To begin with, he had the presence, the majesty, the stateliness, the charm. The Master of the Hunt at Versailles who portrayed Madame de Pompadour with such insight, has bequeathed us an equally accurate portrait of the King. 'A very notable air of nobility was engraven on his countenance, and this was still further enhanced by the way in which he used to carry his head. His mien was stately, but without exaggeration, and although the King was naturally shy, he had succeeded in obtaining sufficient command over his feelings to ensure that his expression should always be firm, but without the least suspicion of displeasure. In public, he bore himself with an air of assurance, with perhaps just a tinge of severity, but that was all. In private, especially when he was talking to any one with whom he wished to be friendly, his eyes would light up with kindness and he seemed to be trying to conciliate the affections of those with whom he was conversing.' When he was with the army,

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the troops loved him from the very start; he talked to them just as they ought to be talked to, and in perfectly appropriate language. During the siege of Menin he lived like a subaltern, eating and sleeping in the trenches. He was brave, naturally, as became a descendant of Henry the Fourth, and he wore his courage with a smile. At Fontenoy, on the eve of the combat, he taught his aide-de-camp some quaint little songs. During the battle, when it looked as if the worst might befall, he remained under fire, calm and collected, divining at a glance the positions to take up, and, by his coolness, instilling fresh courage into the troops whose ranks the earlier charges had broken. 'My dear Mamma,' wrote the Dauphin in a charming letter to Marie Leczinska, 'I cannot tell you the joy I feel at the victory which the King has just won. He showed himself a true King all through, but especially when it looked as if victory was not going to light on his side; for then, without allowing himself to be perturbed by the perplexity in which he saw everyone involved, he himself issued the most sensible orders, with a presence of mind and a decision which no one could help admiring; and it was here, more than anywhere else, that he revealed his true greatness.'

Nevertheless, Louis the Fifteenth was averse to the shedding of blood. He was *not one of those who look upon military glory as the most enviable thing in the world*. One day when he was examining the Dauphin's history course and turning over the leaves of a military atlas with him, he began to talk about war, and the motives which led Kings to declare it. 'Sometimes they are trivial enough,' he said. 'We are answerable for the blood that is shed.'

On the evening after Fontenoy he pointed out to his son the field of battle *all strewn with the dead*.

'See,' he said once more, 'See the price of victory, to a man of kindly heart. The blood of our enemies is, after all, the blood of our fellow-men. The really glorious thing is to spare it.'

His memory was prodigious. He could recall with perfect accuracy names, dates, faces, pedigrees, records of service. Twenty years afterwards, he recollected tiny details which he picked up in the course of a chance conversation and to which, at the moment, he appeared to pay no particular heed. He had the reputation of being lazy. It was undeserved. He worked a great deal, but it was by himself, and in his own fashion, which was not that of his predecessor. For Louis the Fourteenth, the whole essence of kingship was the Council. Important pieces of business came before him, cut and dried, in the form of an oral report, presented by a minister,

on which each of the other members of the Council would pronounce his view in turn. His task and his merit consisted, not in studying the matter at first hand, but in listening to what the others had to say, disentangling the skein of arguments, and taking sides for the one which seemed to have most to be said for it. Thus every decision was arrived at by means of discussion between four or five people, who met in conference almost every day. Towards the end of the reign, this machinery worked with diminished regularity. For lack of competent advisers, Louis the Fourteenth was more and more compelled to tackle details himself. But, in the halcyon days, that was how the thing was worked. The seat of government was the Council Chamber. The King had no other writing desk than the table at which his advisers took their seats. He had no special working room of his own, no bureau, no papers even, except some correspondence that was locked up in two or three deed-boxes and had relation to family matters rather than to secrets of State. The system was by no means new, but Louis the Fourteenth had brought it to perfection, because it was admirably adapted to his particular mental qualities, which were, concentration, regularity, perseverance, moderation and a sense of reality. Louis the Fifteenth, on the other hand, did not take at all kindly to it. His twofold misfortune was to have acceded when very young to the Throne, and, when he arrived at man's estate, to have appointed his tutor to the helm of government. While his predecessor had begun to rule, on his own responsibility, at the age of twenty-three, he remained till he was thirty-two under the tutelage of the man who had been responsible for his education, and before whom he had been accustomed to bow as before the repository of all knowledge. He is invariably portrayed as a vainglorious tyrant. In point of fact, his vices were of a totally opposite nature; lack of self-confidence, fear to insist on having his own way, and an excessive respect for opinions with which he disagreed. In the Council Chamber, instead of being master and requisitioning information on which to base his commands, he long maintained the attitude of the pupil who humbly asks questions for his own information, and trembles to contradict his master. Nevertheless, he was intelligent, he had a strong, alert mind and his brain worked quickly. He knew his Europe, and he had a taste, as well as a flair, for politics. But he was afraid of making mistakes, he was handicapped by an inferiority complex, his sense of his own deficiencies paralysed him, and, scores of times, he held his peace, when he ought to have said 'It shall be so!'

He dared not reprimand a minister who had failed in his duty. He would make much of him in public and have him watched in secret. If he made up his mind to get rid of him, he would not dare to tell him so to his face. He would deceive him with a great show of friendliness and, an hour later, send him a written command to resign his post. They called it deceit. It was not really that, it was merely timidity.

As soon as he was alone, he was himself again. The fact was, he was a man for the office, a man who only worked really well when he was surrounded by notes, dockets and files. 'He likes a lot of papers about him,' says d'Argenson; 'he is fond of study and reading and even of writing in the particular style of M. Chauvelin, who inspired him. He has had cupboards fitted up in a special room, and there his papers are kept in the most scrupulous order, all labelled and ticketed by his own hand. They consist of statements about everything under the sun — products, balance sheets, special systems, plans, and schemes of all sorts.' This was a very secret retreat into which there was no admittance. On the occasion of some supper party or other, Croy observed it from afar, 'all filled with books and instruments, digests and catalogues connected with every rank, grade, or office in the State or the Services'. Like many other of the rooms, this one underwent frequent alteration, but, to this day, may you see there the shelves on which Louis the Well-Beloved ranged his filing-cases for all the world like a model attorney. After all, did he not trace his lineage through his ancestress, Marie of Nemours, Duchesse de Savoie, back to César de Vendôme and Gabrielle d'Estrées, whose grandsire, surnamed Babou, was a notary at Tours about the year 1556? If it was still the fashion to explain characters in the light of heredity, the historians would have there a subject ready to their hand.

On the death of Fleury in January, 1743, the Duc de Noailles restored to Louis the Fifteenth the papers with which Louis the Fourteenth had entrusted him in 1714, among others the *Instructions* in thirty-three articles, which he had prepared for the Duc d'Anjou on his becoming King of Spain. 'I conclude,' Louis the Fourteenth had written, 'with one of the most important pieces of advice it is in my power to give you. Rule; never be ruled. Never have a favourite, nor a Prime Minister. Hear what people have to say, consult your Council, but make your own decision. God who has made you a King, will give you all the insight you require, as long as your intentions are good.' And Noailles enlarged on that theme: 'Your

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Majesty will see in the instructions which I have the honour to hand you, written entirely by the hand of your august great-grandfather, that, of all maxims of state, that great prince regarded it as one of the most important and most essential things for a king to have neither prime minister, nor favourite. All Europe, Sire, is watching what is now going on, and it will redound to your glory to make it clear that you alone are ruler of this great and noble monarchy, that your gifts and your authority are the soul of it and that nothing is done in it, in your name, save under orders issued by you in the light of your full and perfect knowledge.'

Louis turned anything but a deaf ear to these exhortations. He announced that he would govern on his own account and gave Noailles a proof of his gratitude by summoning him to the Council and authorising him to acquaint him directly with any ideas or information he might possess. As good luck will have it, this correspondence, which continues right on until 1758, is still extant. Noailles expresses himself with complete frankness and makes no effort to sugar his style with courtly phrases. 'If we do not set to work with the most serious and unremitting determination to put things right, Your Majesty's troops will relapse into a state of complete demoralization.' - 'Your Household has not done all that might have been expected of it, nor has your regiment of Guards.' - 'In all the government departments there is a certain sluggishness, indolence and insensibility, which must be remedied in the promptest possible manner.' - 'I cannot forbear to tell Your Majesty that your Foreign Affairs are being very badly managed.'

We can imagine the scene. In the morning the King conferred with his ministers; before supper he got through an hour or two's work with a Secretary of State; about ten, he went down again into his study and found there a letter from Noailles.

He read it calmly through, thought over it a few minutes, looked up a file, and sent his reply. He would indulge in no mere contradictions, but argue the thing out perfectly fairly and explain quite clearly, why things were not done well, and then put forward some reasonable plan for setting them to rights.' But this plan had to be made acceptable to ministers and generals who had ideas of their own, who backed them up with sound arguments and put up any number of apparently valid objections against the rival proposals. Bold in conception, quick at perceiving the connection between one event and another, Louis the Fifteenth, when it came to putting his ideas into action, was like a man paralysed. He simply dared

not insist on having his way. He fell back on the routine ideas and cut-and-dried methods of people whom he credited with meritorious qualities they did not always possess, but whom he allowed to influence him. One might put it that he looked at things like an historian rather than a king.

At the same time it would be an exaggeration to say that he had no will of his own. A will he had, but it was sluggish and intermittent. It acted by fits and starts, explosively, when he could stand things no longer, or when he was thoroughly put out. On such occasions he would act with a determined ruthlessness that seemed unaccountable. Even in matters of general policy he would sometimes show himself unexpectedly stubborn, the reason being that he kept intact a powerful source of inspiration, namely, a profound belief in the virtues of the monarchy. Fleury had not brought him up in the enervating atmosphere of *Télémaque*, and, if he had read Rousseau and the Encyclopaedists, their doctrines had not modified his mental outlook, or impaired his sentiments regarding his duties and his powers. He had had too much practical experience of men and things for his judgment to be led astray by books, or the theories of Utopian dreamers. When, therefore, he made up his mind to it, he could adopt the kingly tone, strike awe into his listeners, punish and repress where he would.

Men in whom weakness of will is combined with breadth of intellect, have this consolation, they can look down with contempt on those who advise them ill. 'Louis the Fifteenth' said Le Roy, 'could appreciate the people who worked for him . . . nevertheless, a vague anxiety not to appear always subservient to others, caused him sometimes to put on a frigid air and an imperious expression which would strike terror even into the boldest.' In 1732, at the very height of the Jansenist quarrels, he ordered the deputies of the Parlement to come to him at Compiègne, and held forth to them as follows: 'I have made known my wishes to you, and I desire that they shall be fully carried out. I will put up with no expostulations or answers of any kind whatever. You have but too thoroughly deserved my indignation. Be more obedient and go back to your duties.'

The First President took a step forward and began: 'Sire' . . . 'Silence!'

Then the Abbé Pucelle, in his turn, approached the King and falling on one knee laid a paper before him. Louis the Fifteenth pointed to it with his toe. 'Maurepas' said he, 'tear that up.' Then he turned on his heel and went away.

Louis the Fourteenth had never behaved in such a high-handed manner as that to the chief magistrates of his Kingdom.

But such outbreaks were rare. Emancipated though he was from all prejudice, capable of conceiving and carrying out the most far-reaching reforms, Louis the Fifteenth, from lack of confidence in himself fell back on a policy based on respect for the fundamental laws of the Kingdom, that is to say, on that body of tradition and custom which on all sides countered the exercise of the royal power by setting up in opposition to it the barriers of vested interests and inalienable rights. It could only have been because the situation had become untenable towards the end of the reign, that he resolved, on his own account, to undertake a revolution that might have been the salvation of the monarchy. Until that great stroke was brought off, the power was in fact divided or rather torn in sunder between the King and the different factions; not only court factions, but also, and especially, the great political parties who made up the ruling classes of the nation and with whom the cabals in the royal palace were nothing more than an occasion for taking action. For thirty-three years, public opinion had been incessantly running counter to the authority of the King and manifested the greater boldness because the submissiveness it had displayed for more than a century had unused the monarch to that kind of opposition. To the careful observer, it is evident that the administrative and military machinery of the Crown was very feeble. Its two chief sources of strength were the respect and affection of the people. If those were absent, or impaired, there were several corporate institutions in the country sufficiently strong to hold the Crown in check, such as the Convocation of the Clergy, the Provincial Estates, while the Parlements were so many powerful and ambitious bodies quite prepared to put forward the most audacious claims. Louis the Fifteenth was too prone to think that it was enough for him to be in the right, for his good intentions to be recognised and universally proclaimed. To be sure this had been enough for France to give her whole-hearted support to Louis the Fourteenth in 1661. But things had changed since then. Louis the Fourteenth had outlived his destiny, and a weariness had come upon him. In the words of M. Jacques Bainville, 'it is a misfortune for a king to die either too soon or too late. We may say that one of his duties is to disappear with the people of his time, in accordance with the order of nature, so that whether in the matter of men or ideas, a normal succession shall be maintained.' When Louis the Fourteenth died, there were big accumulations of



youth and impatience waiting to be released. The wildness and excesses of the Regency were but the rebound of something too long repressed, a rebound almost mechanical in its nature. But the Regency imparted its tone to the century. The non-success of the Councils, the restoration of the ex-ministers to their former offices, the prolonged tutelage of the aged Fleury – all this did but violently stimulate ambition and criticism and the hunger for novelty, the passion for reform. ‘The late King, my great-grandfather, whom I wish to imitate as far as in me lies. . .’ is a phrase that occurs in a letter of Louis the Fifteenth’s to Noailles. It was an ambition that did him signal credit. But if France had sat down, not only uncomplainingly, but even gratefully under the autocratic rule of Louis the Fourteenth, the explanation is that she was then but just emerging from the trials and troubles of the *Fronde*, and that, at that juncture, nothing seemed to offer such attractions as peace and civil order. After the Revolution, she accepted the far worse tyranny of Bonaparte. In 1740, no dangers seemed to threaten, the sky was clear, and she was the more disposed to indulge her taste for demolition because she believed that the edifice of the State was well able to resist her iconoclastic efforts, and that no times were really better than the present. What was required was to give guidance to this restless and excitable public opinion, to lead it into the right road and to persuade it to address itself to the work that needed doing. That was one of the duties of the Monarchy.

But Louis the Fifteenth, though he took a delight in the society of artists and men of learning, had an incurable horror of literary people. Their vanity, their squabbles, their pose exasperated him beyond endurance. There is no gainsaying that the encyclopaedists were lacking in the qualities of dignity, unselfishness and moral worth which distinguished the great figures of 1660. Generally speaking they were small-minded men. Nevertheless, for all their short-comings, they were not devoid of talent, nor of influence, nor of importance. Madame de Pompadour was fully aware of this. ‘Take the men of letters under your wing’ – thus Bernis had counselled her – ‘they it was who bestowed the name of “Great” on Louis the Fourteenth’. She did her utmost to act on this advice. Montesquieu, Cr billon, Marmontel, Duclos, Diderot, d’Alembert, Rousseau were all, in divers ways, indebted to her. Voltaire was the best beloved, the spoilt child, the favourite’s favourite, and it was through her that he became an Academician, the Official Historiographer of France, and a Gentleman in Ordinary of the

Bedchamber. But all these feminine favours were no substitute for kingly patronage. Between Madame de Pompadour and the philosophers, it was much more an affair of 'You scratch my back, and I'll scratch your's,' than of favours bestowed by a gracious patroness on her lieges. 'I am more interested in your welfare than you think', Voltaire had written her in 1745. 'Perhaps, indeed, there is no one in Paris who takes a livelier interest in it. These are not the mere honeyed flatteries of an elderly gallant. I am speaking as one good citizen to another.' Thus, at the very start, began that concert of mutual and calculated laudation which made the philosophers indispensable to Madame de Pompadour, and Madame de Pompadour the Egeria of the philosophers. On her side, she provided them with pensions, she housed them, stood between them and the authorities, pushed them on in Society and government circles. In return they celebrated her charms, her wit, her genius; they defended her against her adversaries; they peppered the pietists with pamphlets and pasquinades; they poured ridicule on the Dauphin's circle, on Boyer, on Pompignon, on confessors and bishops and all that crowd that Voltaire dubbed 'those fanatical fools of chaplains'. But the upshot of the whole thing was that, instead of restoring concord around the Throne, Madame de Pompadour, in her role of feminine Maecenas, only succeeded in reinforcing one of the parties between which public opinion was divided.

In this respect, the withdrawal of Voltaire to Ferney in 1760, marks an epoch in our history, for it was the first time that a writer of repute had established himself within a stone's throw of the frontier so that he might gird at the government and its ways. It was the first time also that the royalty of politics had found itself rivalled by a royalty of letters, no less courted and even more irresistible. If the echoes of the outer world, with all its restlessness and clamour, found their way into the recesses of the Court; the Court was the source of all the puffs, the slanders, the songs and the slogans that fomented the passions of the public. In his account of the years which preceded the death of Fleury, d'Argenson, in his quest for office, displays in his memoirs a marvellous attentiveness to these dispensers of frowns and favours. We can follow almost from day to day the plotting that went on in antechambers and corridors. Two quotations will serve better than any amount of explanation, to show how the machine was worked. The first one has to do with a move against Orry, the Controller-General. 'Not only,' writes our author, 'does genuine want exist, but court intrigue is now working against

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the minister to blow him sky high and drive him from office. So everybody at Versailles is talking "famine" harder than ever. It is not only Touraine that is suffering, but all the provinces round about Paris. The Bishop of Chartres made some singularly outspoken remarks on this matter at the King's *lever* and at the Queen's dinner-table; everybody urged him to follow it up. When the King questioned him regarding the condition of the people, he replied that famine and death were let loose among them; that men were eating grass like sheep, and dying like flies, and that, before long, there would be an outbreak of plague, and that everybody would be liable to it, His Majesty included' (May 24th, 1739).

And by way of a diversion, there was this other manœuvre to get Breteuil appointed Secretary for War. 'M. . . . who, the day before yesterday was in the salon at Marly, said it was remarkable how, about five o'clock, people began to declare, as with a single voice, that there was only one man for the post of Secretary of State for War, and that was M. de Breteuil. They said that he was the man, the obvious and only man, and that no other appointment was possible. Two or three of the courtiers put this about in whispers. The Queen was very pleased and some people went and gave the King and the Cardinal to understand that everyone was for M. de Breteuil; that decent people ruled out everyone else, and this had a wonderful effect. . . . It is true that I am the instigator of this advice, which I gave in the morning to M. de Breteuil; after which I saw him writing to his friends telling them to spread the report about at Marly. . . . And so the Cardinal was absolutely obliged, etc., etc.' (February 19th, 1740).

It was from Versailles that the most violent pamphlets against the Marquise were fired off. They even went to the length of denouncing her unedifying origin.

Tandis que Louis dort dans le sein de la honte  
Et d'une femme obscure indignement épris . . . .

That was signed. But who was the gentleman of title that rhymed this other couplet?

Une petite bourgeoise  
Élevée à la grivoise  
Mesurant tout à sa toise  
Fait de la cour un taudis . . . . .

And this other?

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Autrefois de Versailles  
Nous venait le bon goût,  
Aujourd'hui la canaille  
Règne et tient le haut-bout.  
Si la cour se ravale,  
De quoi s'étonne-t-on?  
N'est-ce pas de la halle  
Que nous vient le poisson?

But even the King himself was attacked, threatened, covered with insult:

Lâche dissipateur des biens de tes sujets,  
Toi qui compte les jours par les maux que tu fais,  
Esclave d'un ministre et d'une femme avare,  
Louis, apprends le sort que le ciel te prépare.  
Si tu fus quelque temps l'objet de notre amour,  
Tes vices n'étaient pas encor dans tout leur jour.  
Tu verras chaque instant ralentir notre zèle,  
Et souffler dans nos coeurs une flamme rebelle.  
Des guerres sans succès désolant tes Etats,  
Tu fus sans généraux, tu seras sans soldats . . .  
Tu ne trouveras plus des âmes assez viles  
Pour oser célébrer tes prétendus exploits,  
Et c'est pour t' abhorrer qu'il reste des François.

The authors of these audacious squibs were never discovered. It looked as if some powerful influences were shielding them. Berryer, the Lieutenant of Police, avowed that he was powerless in the matter.

'I know Paris as well as anyone could know it. But I don't know Versailles.'

At last, Louis the Fifteenth made up his mind to strike at the man whom Madame de Pompadour bluntly called 'the boss of the concern', and that was the Comte de Maurepas. Secretary of State in the King's Household since 1718, and for the Navy since 1723, he was an intelligent, active, witty man, a hard and rapid worker, with all the business of his double department at his fingers' end. Beneath a careless and dashing exterior, he concealed a profound knowledge of men and things. Nevertheless, he misused the advantages with which fortune had endowed him. He believed he was at once indispensable and invulnerable. When a man who is fond of jesting, never fails to win applause, it is the most difficult thing in

the world to restrain him from overshooting the mark and from saying things that leave a decided sting behind them. Was Maurepas really responsible for some of the tales about the King that went the round under his name? Did he read every single thing to which he gave his *imprimatur*? What matter? He was responsible for the higher police, the Court and the Capital. On April 16th, 1749, he received his letter of dismissal. It was curt, cruel and contemptuous. 'Your services do not satisfy me. You will hand in your resignation to M. de Saint Florentin. You will go to Bourges; Pontchartrain is too near. You will see none but members of your own family. Do not answer this.' This ruthless application of the axe filled men for a moment with stupefaction. 'Of all empires, the empire of the intellectuals, though invisible to the eye, is the most far-spreading. The man of might may command; but it is the men of mind that govern, because, in the long run, they mould public opinion and, sooner or later, subjugate or overthrow all despotisms.' Coming in at the tail-end of this evolutionary process, Necker sums it up in almost identical terms in his book *l'Administration des Finances*: 'Since those days (the Regency), the power of public opinion has constantly increased and to-day it would be difficult to overthrow it. It exerts a predominant influence over all minds and even princes respect it, so long as they are not carried away by overmastering passions. Some endeavour, of their own free will, to conciliate it, because they are anxious to curry favour with the public. Others, less docile, become insensibly subservient to it by reason of the influence of the people about them. . . . Thus it comes about that the majority of foreigners have, for different reasons, great difficulty in forming a just notion of the authority exercised by public opinion in France. They do not find it easy to form an idea of an invisible power which, without funds, without guards, without an army, imposes its laws on the town, the Court, and is even authoritative within the Royal Palace. Nevertheless nothing is truer, nothing more remarkable.'

The Court, the Parlements, the Estates, the Clergy, the Salons, Finance, the man in the street, the whole Kingdom, right down to the end of the reign were disturbed by intrigues and revolts. The gravest questions, and the most intricate were flung to the public for discussion and furnished occasion for riots. Misunderstood by his people, ill-served by the upper classes, at logger-heads with the Courts of Justice, Louis the Fifteenth's government was carried on amid a welter of controversies and domestic disagreements. French

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policy degenerated into a compromise between what the King wished, what the nation detested and the theorizings of the Utopian dreamers. That in itself is sufficient explanation of its lack of coherence, its ineffectiveness and its reverses. But, as if that were not enough, and as ill-luck would have it, never before had difficulties presented themselves in such numbers and in such complexity. Unity of outlook and command were conspicuously lacking at the very moment when they were most urgently required.

## CHAPTER VII

### LAND AND WATER

WHEN they spoke of Gaul, the geographers of old were accustomed to enumerate at length all the gifts which Nature had showered so lavishly on that favoured land: a temperate climate, a soil suited to the cultivation of all manner of crops, mountains hollowed out into deep valleys, a branching network of rivers and waterways, linking up, with scarce a break, the Inland Sea with the Ocean.

In describing the characteristics of France, this latter was always the essential feature. Eastwards, towards Germany and Russia, the old world presents the appearance of a compact continent. But, in France, its shores draw in so as to form what one might almost term a bridge between the Mediterranean and the Ocean. From Narbonne to Bayonne, the stretch of intervening land scarcely exceeds a hundred leagues in width. Then, on a sudden, the shores broaden out again to form the massive and inaccessible Iberian peninsula. This characteristic configuration is the dominant feature of our land. France is a country situate at the point of approach of two seas, and the means of penetrating into it are so easy, so continuous, so well-designed that one is tempted, like Strabo, to see in them the result of a providential dispensation.

But these advantages have their corresponding drawbacks. Partly maritime, partly continental, France is a prey to conflicting needs and ambitions that solicit her allegiance on every side. Along an extended front, she forms part and parcel of central Europe; she is incorporated into the main body of the Continent like a statue not yet fully disengaged from the mass of unhewn marble; and she is exposed to all the shocks which constantly perturb the Germanic world. From the Ardennes to Dunkirk, the plain lies open to the invader. A score, nay, a hundred times, the foe has come that way. Hardly a hill, hardly a town, but has some tale to tell of a battle fought, or a siege sustained. The very soil seems as though the national policy were scored upon its surface, a policy concerned with frontier-defence, with measures of security, with means of protection against the Imperial invader. And by way of Strasburg, France plays her part, too, in the life of the Rhine. While from the

Vosges to the Loire, rivers and highways converge towards Paris, the plains of Alsace, looking to the north and south, form the connecting link between Italy, the Swiss Cantons, and the Nordic lands. By language, customs and laws, by the manner in which Alsace was united to the Crown of France, she constitutes, looked at a different way, a bridge between the Latin and the Germanic worlds. By means of her, France strikes a wedge into the very heart of the Empire and the Treaties of Westphalia, by transferring to Louis the Fourteenth the Emperor's rights over Alsace, made the French King the protector of Germanic freedom, the guardian of divided Germany.

Unlike the Pyrenees, the Alps are easily crossed. In the sixteenth century, the lure of Italy was so strong that for eighty years the flower of French chivalry shattered itself in vain attempts to found a kingdom there. In 1740, Piedmont, so often invaded and occupied, was hesitating between the two slopes of the mountain chain, uncertain which to choose. From Chambéry to Turin, from the valley of the Rhone to the valley of the Po, it stands, an agglomeration of lofty hills and hollow vales, the porter of the gate, guardian of the peaks and ridges, ready to march forward on this side or on that. But on the shores of the Mediterranean, the Alps, taking an inward curve, scoop out the great concave semicircle which stretches from the Tyrol to the Apennines. All along the coast, hugging the foot of the mountains, winds one of the most venerable highways of Europe, the direct road from Piedmont to Catalonia, running by way of Nice, Marseilles, Languedoc and the pass of Pertuis; a route for the trader; a route for the foe.

One thing must be made clear: it has been on land that France has staked her whole existence. To bar the road to Paris against the foe, that has ever been the cardinal object underlying all her policy. Nevertheless, Nature ordained that she should be a sea, no less than a land, power. All along her coasts, the sea has furnished a livelihood for a countless population of fisherfolk, sailors, shipbuilders, manufacturers, corsairs and merchants. The great seaports, Marseilles, Nantes, Bordeaux, present an animation, a colour, a cosmopolitan character, an air of opulence, which strike amazement into the peasant who comes from the heart of the country, accustomed to limited horizons, and a life of solitude and silence. Marseilles monopolises the trade of the Near East. Upon its quays and in its warehouses are stacks of rugs, silks, muslins, printed calicoes, Cyprus wines, lacquer-ware, skins, wheat, rice and cordials.



Bordeaux and Nantes have the monopoly of colonial goods – spices, coffee, saffron, indigo, sugar, vanilla, tobacco . . . To Dunkirk come timber from the north, brandy, dried fish. . . .

It would be an error to picture this old-time France as existing for itself alone, living peacefully on its own soil and asking nothing from foreign lands save luxury goods and exotic produce. The manufacturer of old, working for a limited market whose needs could be gauged in advance, was little liable to the risk of over-production. But even in Louis the Fifteenth's time, when the economic world was comparatively stable, the textile industry constituted an element of revolutionary potentialities. Owing to the complicated nature and costliness of its plant, and the multiplicity of its transactions, it became a formidable and ceaseless instrument of production. Local, or even neighbouring markets afforded no sufficient outlet for its activities. It worked for a problematic *clientèle*. It was compelled to seek and to find new markets, or to dwindle and go under. If the French flag withdrew from the ports of the Levant, work would be brought to a standstill at Carcassonne, at Castres and at Mazamet. Similarly, if France could not obtain all the cotton she required from America, the factories in Rouen, Amiens and Orléans would be idle, and their hands thrown out of work. What added to the difficulties of the situation, were the terms of the colonial agreement which gave every country the exclusive right of trading with its own possessions. It was only in 1763 that Choiseul gave leave to the West Indies to obtain their supplies of dried fish from America, instead of purchasing it in France. And this concession stands almost by itself. Willy-nilly, the country was compelled to follow two conflicting policies, an expansive one for abroad, a restrictive one for home.

Far simpler were the geographical conditions which regulated, or at least inspired, the trading activities of England. The United Kingdom was in no need of extraneous defences. Its insular position placed it beyond the reach of surprise attacks and sudden invasion. The upheavals to which the continental countries were constantly exposed had no direct effect on England. At most she felt the ricochet of the blow, after it had spent its force. London was not like Paris; the foe was not for ever at its gates. Ever since the eleventh century, all attempts at landing had ended disastrously for those who made them. Privateersmen, fire-ships and a few small vessels, hurriedly fitted out for the combat, had held up the formidable Armada of Philip the Second. Wind, wave and tempest did the

rest. With her fleet to protect her, England, were she so minded, could snap her fingers at the continent. But let France make a single false step, let her be misled into a momentary relaxation of her efforts for self-defence, laying down her arms or pursuing some chimerical will o' the wisp, and her very existence would be at stake. England on the other hand, secure from invasion, entrenched within her inviolable island shores, might make a similar or worse miscalculation and, at the worst, suffer a temporary disadvantage. England would merely stake her prestige, where France would be gambling on her very existence. A defeat that would cost France her life, would merely compel England to suspend operations for a time.

A similar unity and simplicity is exhibited in the policy she pursues in the fields of trade and finance. It would, of course, be an error to look upon England as having always been a trading nation. Up to the middle of the seventeenth century, agriculture was still her staple industry. It is estimated that in 1660 five-sixths of the inhabitants of England supported themselves by farming and cattle-rearing. Though, at that date, London already numbered half a million inhabitants, Bristol, the second largest town in the kingdom, could not boast of more than thirty thousand, and after Bristol, there were but five or six towns with a population that reached so much as the neighbourhood of six thousand. But about 1680, the situation underwent a change. The Navigation Acts of 1651 and 1660 began to bear fruit. Foreign vessels were not allowed to enter English ports save to discharge cargoes originating in their own countries. All other trade, and especially goods from Africa, Asia, America, the Levant and the North were reserved for English bottoms, that is to say for English built ships, belonging to English owners, commanded by English captains and manned by crews seventy-five per cent English. Forty years later, the transformation was complete. In the wake of the India Company and the Bank of England, the two great capitalist institutions of the Kingdom, a host of limited companies came into being and prospered. The financial catastrophe of 1720, and the bursting of the South Sea Bubble did not stem the commercial advance. The expulsion of the Stuarts and the advent of the Hanoverians transferred the seat of power to the money-wielding classes. Landowners, bankers and merchants banded themselves together for the purpose of exploiting newly discovered countries. Whilst the Netherlands, exhausted by their wars with France, were gradually declining from their high estate, England was making a resolute bid for the sole empire of the

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seas, the sovereignty of the Straits and the control of the Ocean trade-routes.

And now her great industrial future was beginning to open out before her. The mechanical era began in England far in advance of the rest of Europe. Urged on by the exporters, the manufacturers increased their production, and themselves joined hands with the exporters in seeking new outlets for their goods. The yeomen, the agricultural middle class, the independent peasantry, were swallowed up by the towns, and disappeared. The lesser properties were annexed one after another to the larger estates. Lords, colonial nabobs, the *nouveaux riches* of trade and industry, eagerly carried on this work of dispossession. Reduced to the level of mere purveyors of bread and meat to the great manufacturing centres, the rural districts were no longer capable of holding their own against the imperialistic ambitions of the City. While, in France, economic developments proceeded in the direction of a growing complexity, in England the trend was towards centralization and the unification of interests. The whole life of the country was henceforth dependent on its overseas trade. As Albert Sorel puts it, England's whole policy was centred in its merchants' ledgers. It was forced on the mind in too imposing and unequivocal a manner to admit of hesitation or indecision. Having sacrificed its agriculture to its manufactures, having erected factories capable of an output far in excess of the rate of home consumption, and having built a merchant navy far too great for merely national requirements, England was compelled to seek out new lands and fresh consumers. If other powers attempted to bar their way across the ocean, or to deny them access to their own colonies, there was but one course open to them, and that was to batter down the barriers with the fire of their guns and to seize by force the possessions they coveted. 'It seems to me to be the principal characteristic of this phase,' writes the English historian Seeley, 'that England is at once commercial and warlike. A commonplace is current about the natural connection between commerce and peace, and hence it has been inferred that the wars of modern England are attributable to the influence of a feudal aristocracy. Aristocracies, it is said, naturally love war, being in their own origin military; whereas the trader just as naturally desires peace, that he may practise his trade without interruption. A good specimen of the *a priori* method of reasoning in politics! Why! how came we to conquer India? Was it not a direct consequence of trading with India? And that is only the most conspicuous illustration of a law

which prevails throughout English history in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, – the law, namely, of the intimate interdependence of war and trade, so that throughout that period trade leads naturally to war and war fosters trade. England indeed grew ever more warlike at that time as she grew more commercial.’

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the relations between England and France had been sometimes friendly, sometimes unfriendly, according to the circumstances of the moment. But from 1688 onwards, the situation was completely changed. War was the rule, and peace no more than a suspension of hostilities, a breathing space to allow the combatants to repair their shattered forces. The list is an easy one to draw up. In 1688, came the War of the League of Augsburg which lasted nine years, till 1697; in 1702, came the War of the Spanish Succession, which lasted eleven years, till 1713; in 1741, followed the War of the Austrian Succession which ended in 1748, having lasted seven years; in 1756, began the Seven Years’ War which ended in 1763, in 1778 the American War of Independence broke out and lasted till 1783; in 1793, we have the earlier coalition of the Powers against the Revolutionary regime, which was terminated by the Peace of Amiens in 1802, that is to say, nine years of war; in 1803 came the coalition against Napoleon, whose activities went on for twelve years, coming to an end in 1815. In the course of those hundred and twenty-seven years, France came to grips with England in seven great wars, which lasted for a total of sixty years. If we except the years 1713 to 1741, which correspond, in the case of France, to the Regency and Fleury’s period of office, and, in that of England, to the ministries of Stanhope and Walpole, England for more than a century remained in the forefront of our enemies. The hostility of England is the dominant factor of our history during that period. It was also the dominant factor in the history of the world.

The French do not always take sufficient account of the persistence of this rivalry between the two nations. There is no recognition of its continuity in the school-books’ treatment of it. They revert to the theme several times but, on each occasion, the connecting thread is hidden by the interposition of events in Europe which, because they are closer to us, dwell more vividly in our memory. The salient fact, however, is that between 1688 and 1815 England was at war with France and finally wrested from the whole of Europe the sovereignty of the seas and became the principal carrying-power of the world. Who was to be supreme, as a colonis-

ing, maritime and commercial power? Such was the question that fell to be decided in this second Hundred Years' War. But, whereas England waged the conflict with a clear vision of the end to be attained, and a full determination at all costs to attain it, France, handicapped by her amphibious nature, was continually obliged to divide her forces, to put up a fight simultaneously on land and sea, with public opinion continually vacillating and unable to say in which direction the proper interests of the nation lay. In this immense struggle, the reign of Louis the Fifteenth was an episode fraught with events of deep, and in some respects decisive, significance.

The immediate causes of conflict were very various in their nature. In India, the work of colonization had been carried out, not by the respective governments, but by two private companies. The English company had been formed in 1599, the French, in 1604. The headquarters of the former were at Madras, those of the latter at Pondicherry. Each of them was concerned far more with commerce than with conquests; both were less anxious to extend their frontiers, than to extend their trade in cotton goods. They sometimes combined to carry out in conjunction some specific piece of work, and their employees were often on the friendliest terms together. But after the death of the Great Mogul, Aureng-Zeb, which occurred in 1707, India relapsed into a state of anarchy analogous to that of Europe after the death of Charlemagne. Whilst the English Governor remained more or less inert, the heads of the French Company thought it would be a good idea to make capital out of the quarrels of the native princes, in the first place to secure their own complete independence, and in the second, to get whatever concessions, privileges and territories they might be able to exact. They did not straightway make a regular system of this line of conduct. Advices from the Board in Paris kept impressing on them the need for caution, and urged them to avoid mixing themselves up in costly adventures. But somehow or other, having once begun to meddle with native affairs, the French Governors insensibly became more and more deeply involved. They wanted to consolidate this or that position, or they had to maintain their prestige, or there was a piece of native extortion to be punished, or some bandits to be run to earth, or else they were called upon to act as arbitrators, or there were native petitions to be heard, or, failing these, there was love of adventure and the greed for gold to lure

them on. As long ago as Louis the Fourteenth's time, François Martin, the founder of Pondicherry, had foreshadowed a policy of intervention. His successors, Lenoir and Dumas, began to put it into practice. Dumas, in particular, intervened with boldness in the troubles of the Deccan and the Carnatic. He obtained admission into the hierarchy of the princes, received from one of Aureng-Zeb's successors the title of Nabob and the right to mint money. This was a step towards the establishment of a protectorate. However, nothing definite had been fixed. When Dupleix succeeded Dumas in 1741, the two companies were still trading side by side in friendly rivalry. Dupleix himself seems at first to have had no other ambition than to increase his turn-over.

In America, the position was widely different. On the shores of the Saint Lawrence, as long ago as Richelieu's day, France had planted a colony within the strict meaning of the word, a piece of herself, an extension of the Mother Country. Not only the inhabitants, but the government system came from France, and made Canada a real province of the kingdom. In the census of the early settlers all the typical grades of the French social organism are to be seen: priests, monks, aristocrats, ex-officers, merchants, surgeons, doctors, a notary, an attorney, soldiers, masons, carpenters, blacksmiths, and, last but not least, peasants — real genuine peasants from the old country. Normans, Percherons, Picards, Poitevins, Angevins, Saintongeais — all western France is there except Brittany and Gascony. Among the number there were a great many tillers of the soil, but also a good many sons of small landowners, who were emigrating so as not to split up the family estate. During and after the wars of Religion, there was a large influx of fervent Catholics. 'The first inhabitants of Canada,' wrote Père Charlevoix, in 1744, 'were either workmen who had always been employed on useful labour, or people of good family who had betaken themselves thither in the hope of living a more peaceful existence and of finding there a place more favourable to the practice of their religion than was possible in several provinces of the Kingdom, where the Protestants were in considerable force.' At all events, they were neither adventurers, nor loafers, nor deportees, not beggars. 'For the work of clearing the Canadian forests, stout hearts and sturdy hands were needed.' In the eighteenth century we find the philosophers representing Canada as a hotbed of diseased prostitutes and ex-convicts. Such a statement is a wretched slander. Law's off-scourings were destined for Louisiana, and those colonists-despite-themselves soon

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found a means of escape. As some such lie had been current even as far back as the seventeenth century, a Canadian, Pierre Boucher, came over to France in 1660 to stand up for his compatriots. In his *Histoire véritable et naturelle de la Nouvelle France* he refutes the foolish legend that tells of shiploads of women-of-the-town. 'As touching this question of drabs and trollops,' he says, 'if any such get through, it is because they are not known, and when they are in the country, they are obliged to live decent lives, for otherwise it would go hard with them. We can hang here as well as other people, as we have proven unto some who knew not how to comport themselves.' In point of fact, there were only one or two suspicious cargoes. From 1723 to 1749, in order to supply a shortage of labour, several shipments of prisoners, amounting to about a thousand all told, were sent out at various times from France. But these, for the most part, were youthful offenders, peasants undergoing punishment for poaching, contravening the salt regulations, or the game laws. Among these last there were, indeed, some hotheaded customers, but, after all, can you call a man a criminal for trapping a hare, or for evading the duty on a pound of salt?

The Abbé Groulx, a professor at Montreal University, says very truly, in his excellent work, the *Birth of a People*, 'the Canadian pioneers were a very honourable race of men. The moral purity, the flowers of virtue and heroism which bloomed so freely in New France, could not have sprung from a moral cesspool. In addition to their probity, these new-comers from the Old Country brought with them a burning faith and an undying affection for the land of their birth. They came from the land of the Hundred Years' War, and the Wars of Religion. Their trials, the fact that they had lived so long confronted by the foe, had given strength to their spiritual natures. They were accustomed to the reign of order and the salutary effects of social discipline. Their spirits, whether gentle or simple, thrilled with the pride of belonging to the finest race and the foremost Kingdom in the world. With full hearts, their far-off descendants may give thanks to Providence that it vouchsafed to their forefathers, poor though they were in this world's goods, the nobler riches of righteousness and honour. Next to the Faith, is not the chief good and rarest privilege a people can possess, to be able to speak of their ancestors with pride?'

As we set down the story of these pioneers, heroism is the word that spontaneously takes shape beneath our pen, and never could the use of it be more thoroughly justified. Losing their way in the

forest, far removed from every means of succour, beset with perils on every hand, their only road the river, these intrepid toilers grimly carried on their unending fight against forest, frost, disease, suffering and despair. Round about them roamed the Indian like a wild beast stealthily tracking down its prey. Behind every bush he lurked, silent and invisible. He was the reed that trembled with the wind, the shadow that stole swiftly by in the twilight. All through the first war against the Iroquois, from 1647 to 1667, the colonists lived in constant terror of their lives. Homesteads were sacked, harvests plundered, workers in the field ruthlessly done to death, villages stormed, women carried off and put to the torture. Not a month went by without its tale of horror and disaster. It was not until they had lived for twenty years under the constant threat of death, that Carignan's regiment arrived and brought with it, at last, a feeling of security. In 1667, Canada did not number four thousand souls. Thanks, however, to the efforts of Colbert and Talon, the population increased in the space of a few months to six thousand, two hundred and eighty-two. After that the rate again declined. On several occasions the births and fresh arrivals were exceeded in number by the deaths and the departures. By 1714, the population was still under nineteen thousand; but with the arrival of peaceful days, it again began to grow. By 1730, it was more than thirty-four thousand, and in 1756 it had reached seventy thousand. Canada was at last a nation; man had won the victory over the forest and over death. The colony boasted its fields of wheat, hemp and flax; its spinning-mills, its fisheries, its forges, its royal highways, its ship-yards, its ports, its breweries, its flocks and herds, its fleets of craft for sea, lake and river navigation.

But the Canadians did not rest content with exploring the banks of the St. Lawrence. They had pushed on to the West and the South, they had come to the region of the Great Lakes and made their way into the upper basin of the Mississippi by one of the numerous tracks of which the Indians had long been accustomed to make use. At certain places for example, in the neighbourhood of Lake Michigan, the dividing line was so faintly marked, that, in times of flood, it was possible to cross directly from one basin to the other. In 1762, Frontenac, the Governor, sent a trader named Jolliet and a missionary, Père Marquette, to explore the Mississippi. They returned, having discovered Illinois, Ohio and the Missouri. They had followed the course of the great river to the point where it unites with the Arkansas, and on this vast and vaguely delineated



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territory they bestowed the fine-sounding name of Louisiana. Pushing on still further, Cavelier de La Salle descended the course of the Mississippi as far as the Gulf of Mexico and formally took position of the delta, in the King's name (1682). Two years later, he attempted to get back by sea, but his expedition, ill-led and unsuitably manned, came to hopeless grief. Nevertheless his great design did not fail of its fulfilment. A new expedition, commanded by a skilful navigator named Le Moyne d'Iberville, carried out an effective occupation of the lower of the Mississippi. Law conferred a high-sounding charter on the country. The capital, New Orleans, was founded. Notwithstanding many disappointments and miscalculations, the colony gradually developed. It was a tropical colony, devoted to the cultivation of rice, maize, cotton, tobacco and indigo. When, in 1731, the *Compagnie des Indes* retroceded Louisiana to the Crown, it numbered some five thousand inhabitants. A sparse chain of outposts and little forts, stretching from Saint Louis to Detroit, linked up Louisiana with Canada. A whole century before the arrival of the Anglo-Saxon, its hunters had seen and noted the Rocky Mountains and brought back tidings of the great water-ways which, starting from the ridge of the mountain chain, lead down to the mysterious sea of the West men call the Pacific Ocean.

From these heroic labours sprang the rivalry between France and England. The thirteen English colonies, stretching in line along the shores of the Atlantic, were now enveloped by us. Whilst, in their progress towards the interior, the English had been held up, or delayed, by the wooded barrier of the Alleghanies, the French had turned the obstacle at its two extremities and had blocked, in advance, the further progress of their adversaries. If the French were able firmly to establish themselves, the English colonies would soon be nothing but a wedge shut in by the French on three sides. But such an inglorious situation was not very likely to satisfy them, more especially as, though they may have been lacking in enterprise, they were certainly not lacking in men. In 1740, they numbered a million as compared with 40,000 French.

It would be paying an excessive compliment to the English colonists to suppose that they were all religious or political refugees, fleeing, for conscience sake, from the tyranny and persecutions of an ungrateful country. There were among them vagabonds, beggars, ruffians condemned to transportation, ticket-of-leave men, convicts and adventurers. An American historian advised some

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friends of his who had a weakness for tracing their pedigrees into the dim and distant past, to begin their researches with a careful examination of the English prison registers. The quip was not without its point, nor does the habit of encouraging emigration by the exhibition of fanciful and alluring posters date from the day before yesterday. Never has there been anything to compare with the pamphlets printed and circulated with a special eye to attracting the peasantry of Switzerland and Germany. If they were to be credited, the Garden of Eden was nothing more than a little back yard compared with Carolina. All this propaganda duly brought forth fruit. The emigrants, assembled by the eloquence of the recruiting agent, started for America armed with an indenture which insured their virtual enslavement for ten or perhaps twenty years, and when they arrived, the shipowner put them up to auction. As late as January, 1774, the *Pennsylvania Messenger* still contained advertisements of which the following is a specimen:

### Germans.

We have at present on offer fifty Germans who have recently arrived. They may be inspected at the *Golden Swan*, kept by the Widow Kreider. The consignment includes schoolmasters, artisans, peasants, boys and girls of various ages.

The prices varied according to supply and demand. The bidding was brisk for the peasants; schoolmasters were at a discount.

The incongruous and frequently shoddy elements composing this mixed assortment of colonists, were welded together by two common necessities, the need to live, and the need to protect themselves against the foe. They formed a united front against the Indians, the Dutch, the Spaniards and the French. The sense of danger united them into a compact and vigorous body ready alike for attack or defence. However, if, looking back on events from the point at which we have now arrived, it is easy to understand the reasons which set the French and English at enmity, the adversaries themselves only came to realize them by slow degrees. It frequently happens in colonial crises that the major problem presents itself, to begin with, in one of its least important aspects. Thus, in the origins of the Anglo-Canadian war, much importance must be attached to the activities of the fur-trappers on either side.

Notwithstanding the agricultural development, the prosperity of both English and French possessions depended in reality on what was called the *traite indienne*, that is to say on the fur trade in general, and on the fur of the beaver in particular. Whereas the farming

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districts of the two nationalities were separated from one another by hundreds, and in many cases, by thousands of miles, the fur traders were always in close contact and in permanent competition. The important thing was always to be the first to get in touch with the native and to buy his furs before he had time to offer them to a rival bidder. It was these traders who first began the struggle, and who carried the field of competition ever farther and farther westwards, as the hunting grounds nearer home became denuded of their quarry. It was they who dragged their customers, the Indian native tribes, into the war, and, in the last resort, it was they who, in the early days, by their ever-increasing collisions, forced the hand of their respective governments.

In 1713, by the Treaty of Utrecht, France ceded to England, Newfoundland, the Hudson Bay territory and Nova Scotia, Port Royal there becoming Annapolis. The boundaries of Nova Scotia and the Hudson Bay territory were not clearly defined, and the uncertainty regarding their delimitation subsequently gave rise to disputes which were never satisfactorily settled. Similarly with the clause relating to the Iroquois: these were recognized as British subjects, but there was no agreement as to how far their territory extended. While the French only assigned them a comparatively limited area to the south of Lake Ontario, English cartographers allowed them the greater part of the Mississippi basin, the whole of the region of the Great Lakes and a portion of Western Canada. Although, during the Regency, as well as during Fleury's term of office, the countries were officially supposed to be at peace, hostilities in America never came to an end. Spottiswood, the Governor of Virginia, contended, in a report that became historical, that the thirteen colonies encircled by the French would die for lack of breath unless they succeeded in cutting the communications between Canada and Louisiana by taking forcible possession of the country about the Ohio. In fact, as M. Heinrich has demonstrated in a notable monograph on the subject, the English shamelessly continued to carry on their policy of encroachment and double-dealing. They armed their Indian allies against us, they stirred up sedition among the tribes under our protection and attempted to carry out a surprise attack on the fort constructed by us at Niagara. In a word, they used the official alliance as a cloak beneath which they waged against us a ceaseless war whose weapons were intrigue, murder, ambush and rapine.

The third and last occasion of conflict was the trade with the

Spanish colonies. The Spaniards possessed a vast dominion, namely, Mexico, Central America, and the whole of South America except Brazil. From all these lands, foreigners were rigidly excluded. Spaniards alone had the right to enter them, to carry on trade with them and to exploit their mines. Twice a year, in January and October, a fleet of galleons set sail from Cadiz. The vessels directed their course to the West Indies, and there the fleet divided into two portions. One part proceeded to Mexico, the rest to Porto-Bello. There they unloaded their freight of manufactured articles, arms, stuffs and comestibles, and took on board, in exchange, gold, silver, spices, precious stones, quinine and Campeachy wood. The whole fleet then re-assembled at Havanah and, laden with treasure, started on the homeward voyage. But, although, on the face of it, this trade was purely Spanish, in reality, four-fifths of it was French. Disorganised and industrially unproductive, Spain was in no position to furnish the Americas with the things they needed. Nearly the whole came from France: lace from le Velay; silk-stockings from Lyons; linen goods from Brittany and Picardy; hats, from Paris; woollens and cottons from Carcassonne and Rouen. Although the burdens were heavy – customs duties on entering, embarkation dues on leaving, and five per cent commission for the Spanish middle-man – this trade, being a monopoly, was highly remunerative, and of first rate importance to our manufacturers. The cloth-workers, in particular, never failed to obtain accurate information in advance regarding the tastes of their American customers, and their representatives were always in a position to display books of samples with a wide range of patterns. There is extant a copy of one of these sample books containing no less than fifty patterns. It was among the papers of Maurepas, and is in the possession of the Comte Etienne de Chabannes. It is not a little startling to note that time has not dimmed their colours, and that they are as vivid as on the day they first saw the light.

By 1713, England had very considerably compromised our interests in this department of activity. First and foremost, she had succeeded in obtaining from Madrid the exclusive right of carrying slave labour. Henceforth the right to import African natives into South America for work on the plantations there belonged solely to her. Secondly, she had been authorised, for a period of thirty years, to send annually to Vera Cruz, direct from London as the port of origin, a ship laden with merchandise entirely free of duty. The terms of the agreement stipulated that the vessel should not exceed

five hundred tons. In point of fact, the English invariably made use of a ship of eight hundred to a thousand tons. Nor was this all. At every port of call, the vessel invariably took on board fresh supplies of what were said to be victuals, but which were, in fact, nothing more nor less than additional stocks of merchandise. By this subterfuge, the annual freighting permitted under terms of the agreement was indefinitely increased, and transformed the ship into a sort of floating warehouse with a stock that was being perpetually renewed. This trade could not but prosper at the expense of our own, which, as we paid taxes, was bound to be undercut, while the Spanish revenue was deprived of the duties by which, in the ordinary way, it would have benefited.

Louis the Fourteenth died two years after the Peace of Utrecht was signed; but before he departed, the old King managed to impart to his successor a great and memorable lesson. With a Bourbon firmly established at Madrid, the Hapsburgs permanently excluded from Spain and forced to content themselves with their hereditary dominions and the empty dignity of the Imperial Crown, the long period of conflict between France and Austria might at length be considered as having reached its term. The struggle against the House of Austria would henceforth be without a purpose. True, France had not conquered Belgium, and nearly the whole of the Rhine frontier was still in other hands. But the way in which Germany was split up – the multiplicity of Germanies in other words – was a far better protection to France than ever any river could have been. For France, therefore, to pursue an unreasoning hostility, would simply be to play into the hands of England, who was always on the look out for an occasion to profit by continental imbroglios. On the other hand, a *rapprochement* between the two powers, would have the advantage of consolidating the *status quo*.

The instructions received by the Comte de Luc in January, 1715, freely enlarged upon these views: It would fall to the King's Ambassador – the first to go with that title to Vienna – 'to bring about between France and Austria a union which will be as advantageous to their respective interests, as it is necessary for the maintenance of peace and quiet in Europe generally. Their dissensions, which have been productive of so many wars, have served hitherto to curtail their respective influence, but a complete understanding between them at the present time would enable them henceforth to maintain that superiority over all those other powers who have

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hitherto been able to claim equality with them for the sole reason that while they made war on one, they were conciliated by the other with the object of enlisting their support.'

The Comte de Luc was to make it clear to the Emperor that France no longer harboured any objection to the Imperial Crown remaining in his family; and, moreover, he would aid him to ensure that no other power should ever gain possession of it. In fact, if the Hapsburgs, thus humbled and restricted, could not convert their honorific pre-eminence into an effective political power by the creation of a real German Monarchy, there were other princes who might conceive the idea, other princes who might seek support for their aims in the opposite, that is to say, in the Protestant, camp. Two sovereigns were pointed out to the envoy as being especially dangerous. These were the Elector of Hanover, and the Elector of Brandenburg, both of whom had already secured royal crowns outside the frontiers of the Empire; the former in England, the latter in Prussia. It was to be pointed out that both had gained immensely in power and prestige. The real danger was there.

But, just as she formed a *rapprochement* with the second continental power in order to put a check on the ambitions of Prussia and Hanover, so also France was for entering into an alliance with the greatest colonial power of the time as a means of hindering England's overseas expansion. The Franco-Spanish Entente, strengthened by ties of kinship, would oppose to England's mercantile ambitions the united front of the threatened nations.

Then Louis the Fourteenth died, and the whole plan fell to the ground. But as soon as Louis the Fifteenth transferred the conduct of French political affairs to Fleury, the old Cardinal rescued the country from the welter of wild-cat schemes, deep-laid plots and personal intrigues into which it had fallen and brought it back again to a sense of its own real interests. The acquisition of Lorraine rounded off the Kingdom to the eastward, and it was clear that nothing was to be gained by attempting to extend its frontiers in that direction. For once in his life, Fleury put his foot down. Chauvelin, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, who, in concert with Elisabeth Farnese, persisted in continuing his anti-Austrian manœuvres, was promptly banished from the Court, deprived of his office and exiled to his estate at Grosbois, and, later on, to Bourges (February, 1737). In December, the Marquis de Mirepoix set out for Vienna with instructions to work for 'the establishment of an understanding and union, both lasting and intimate, between the

King and the Emperor'. 'The power of the two houses of Bourbon and Austria,' – so ran the instructions 'has arrived at a point which ought to put an end to the jealousy with which they have so long regarded one another.' Since 1715 the English had banked on these divisions with a cynicism to which it was high time to set a term. Fleury was weary of this burdensome solicitude, of these 'good offices' which bore a close resemblance to blackmail, and which were as onerous as a state of open war. Never had there been so propitious an opportunity of deposing England from her position as arbitrator in the affairs of Europe.

Whilst French and English kept coming into collision from the Saint Lawrence to the Gulf of Mexico, an acute subject of dissension arose between England and Spain. At the instigation of the minister Patino, the Court of Madrid had just been putting forth an immense effort to revive the activity of the country. A fleet had been constructed, arsenals had been refitted, factories opened, iniquitous taxes abolished and the whole finance machinery put on a new and improved basis. Spain, with greater confidence in herself, thought it was high time she got more tangible advantages out of her vast possessions in America. With this object in view, she decided to put an end to the scandal of the British trading ship, as well as to the smuggling which the British had long been carrying on unchecked on the frontiers of Mexico, and in the various ports adjacent to the West Indies. A fleet of coast-guard vessels was ordered to keep a sharp look-out in American waters, and the trading ship, before leaving London, was compelled to fill up a number of forms – inventories, certificates, permits – which the Spanish Embassy, with a very ill grace, presented for completion at the last possible moment. Acting on instructions received, the customs officials carried out a strict search of all English vessels cruising off the American coast. A number of them were seized, their crews put ashore, and their cargoes confiscated or destroyed.

London and Bristol were at once ablaze with indignation. As the year 1737, drew to its end, war was on everyone's lips. From all the principal trading centres came indignant protests against the government's inaction. It veritably rained petitions on the House of Commons. In March, 1738, the Opposition suddenly produced a certain Captain Jenkins who posed as a martyr in the English cause. He told the members of the House how his ship had been held up and boarded by a Spanish privateersman on the high seas off Jamaica. His companions, he said, had been put to the torture,

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and he himself strung up at the yard arm. Three times they let him dangle till he was all but dead. In the end, however, the Spaniards contented themselves with cutting off one of his ears, breaking out, as they performed the operation, into the most blasphemous insults against His Most Gracious Majesty, the King of England. To prove his tale, Jenkins carried the precious ear in his hand, wrapped up in a piece of cotton-wool. 'I called on God for help', he told his audience, 'and on my country for vengeance.' This yarn had a tremendous effect. It was put into doggerel and set to music. Before long the tune was all over the country. Later on, it is true, Alderman Beckford, who had been responsible for bringing Jenkins to the House, frankly confessed that if any of the members had been inquisitive enough to pull off the Captain's wig, he would have found both ears duly and firmly fixed in their appointed places.

The war-mongers continued their campaign with ever-increasing violence. In vain, the peace-loving Walpole procured indemnities from Madrid for the goods that had been wrongfully confiscated. In a fiery manifesto, the American planters demanded that the right of search should be abolished. The Lord Mayor of London, the various provincial municipalities, the merchants of London, Bristol, Liverpool and Edinburgh insisted that vigorous measures should be taken against Spain. Walpole scored yet another victory in the Commons, but feeling in the Country was dead against him. Before long he was compelled by popular clamour to take the usual preliminary measures for mobilization: press-gangs, increased taxation, issue of a loan, addition of ten men to every regimental company, more ships for America and Gibraltar. And then, at last, on October 19th, 1739, he declared war on Spain.

What attitude was France going to take up? For some years past, her economic progress had been remarkable. 'For twenty years, now,' wrote Voltaire, 'the principles of trade have been better understood in France than at any time from the days of Pharamond to those of Louis the Fourteenth.' In London, numerous pamphlets attributed the industrial depression which had set in after the year 1735, mainly to the effects of French competition. The reports issued by various companies drew attention to the success of French manufactures, and blamed them for the forebodings expressed by Joshua Gee in his famous work, *Commerce and Navigation in Great Britain*. 'The attention given by French ministers to industrial development and the making it subservient to the common interests



of the State are especially remarkable. People brought up in a strictly business atmosphere, with their whole attention concentrated upon trade, could scarcely have taken more accurate or more effective measures.' Whatever President Hénault may have said to the contrary, Fleury retained a lively interest in the welfare of the colonies and of the shipping industry. He realised to the full that England would never willingly cast aside her dreams of hegemony, and that sooner or later, unless the French colonies were to be written off as a loss, the struggle with England would have to be resumed. In a letter addressed in August, 1740, to Amelot, one of the Secretaries of State, he set forth his policy in detail. The first thing was to maintain peace on the continent, to warn Prussia, to reassure Holland, to enter into no further commitments with Spain in view of territorial readjustments in Italy. The next thing in importance was to build as many ships as possible between now and the ensuing Spring . . . . to encourage shipowners to see to it that we had them by next Spring.' In the Indies and in Louisiana, they would remain on the defensive. 'Let the stations and the ships under the control of our India Company, which are exciting the jealousy of the English, be on the alert, so as not to be taken at a disadvantage.' On the other hand they would take the offensive in Canada by launching a twofold attack – on Nova Scotia and on the Iroquois, who were in alliance with the English. Lastly, an offensive should be directed against the adversary's finances. 'As our expedition will bring down stocks in England, we must take advantage of the fall to attack our enemy's credit. In September, two squadrons of fifteen vessels each set sail, from Brest and Toulon, for America.

One month later, the Emperor Charles the Sixth died without male issue, and this unlooked-for event flung France back again into the melting-pot of European complications.

Charles the Sixth had nourished the illusion that a series of duly executed legal documents would suffice to confirm his daughter, Maria Theresa, in the undisturbed possession of her heritage. Having appointed her to succeed him in all his hereditary possessions, the Austrian dominions, the Kingdoms of Bohemia and Hungary, Belgium, the Milanese territory and the Duchy of Parma, he had spent a considerable portion of his reign in bringing this Pragmatic Sanction, as it was called, to the notice of the several interested parties, beginning with his kinsfolk and finishing up with the various foreign powers; after which he had busied himself in

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obtaining their assent thereto. In exchange for concessions, which, in some cases, were anything but negligible, Spain, Russia, Prussia, Holland, England, the Imperial Diet, Denmark and France, had successively signified their concurrence. But the ill-success which had attended his arms in Italy and the East, had left the Emperor without money, without credit and without an army. There was a very strong temptation to cut oneself a jacket out of so ample a cloak – so strong that the most solemnly attested obligations were quite powerless to counteract it. Almost all the provinces which were united under the sway of the Hapsburgs had come by way of marriage settlements, and were restricted by entails of every kind and by testamentary dispositions whose complicated nature exhausted almost all the varieties of bequest known to German jurisprudence. Invoking on behalf of the Princesses, their wives or kinsfolk, settlements anterior in date to the Pragmatic Sanction, the Electors of Bavaria and Saxony, the King of Spain and the King of Sardinia put in their respective claims to the whole of the inheritance. Although it was quite clear that these exaggerated and nebulous demands were only put forward as a means of furnishing the claimants with a weapon for bargaining for more moderate, but more definite concessions, even these latter, if granted, would have meant the end of the Hapsburg dynasty. The Bavarian wanted Bohemia and the Imperial Crown; the Saxon, Moravia; the Piedmontese, Milan; the Spaniard, Parma and Piacenza for an Infante. At the last moment, an actor no one had counted on appeared on the scene. Without the slightest warning, without a shred of moral or legal justification, the new King of Prussia, Frederick the Second, invaded Silesia (December, 1740). ‘Know once for all,’ he afterwards wrote, ‘that in the matter of Kingdoms, you take when you have the chance, and that you’re never in the wrong so long as you’re not compelled to give back what you’ve taken.’

A story related in all the contemporary memoirs, has the merit of painting to the life the attitude of mind of Louis the Fifteenth, his ministers, and his Court, when the news from Germany reached their ears. Talking at Versailles about the death of Charles the Sixth and its consequences, the King, who had hitherto been silent, at last let fall this observation:

‘There is only one thing for us to do, and that’s to stay on Mont Pagnotte (Mont Pagnotte is a little hill in the Forest of Chantilly where the quarry was often started. To stop on Mont Pagnotte was therefore to look on at others fighting, while you yourself held aloof from the fray).

Whereupon, one of those present, the Marquis de Souvre, quickly retorted:

'Your Majesty would be chilly. Your ancestors have not done any building there.'

The very triviality of the remark is highly characteristic of Louis the Fifteenth. The whole man is there, his practical insight, his bourgeois common-sense, and his ability to take in a situation at a glance. The courtier's rejoinder is more significant still, for it reveals the extent to which men's minds were still under the influence of the Anti-Austrian tradition. In vain did Fleury explain that they were not back in the days of the Emperor Charles the Fifth, that Austria, 'hanging her diminished head', was no longer a source of danger, that the task was accomplished, and that it was neither necessary nor expedient to try to push matters further. The Court and the Town turned a deaf ear. For two centuries past, the nobility had won fame and fortune by their exploits on the battlefield against the Austrians. For two centuries, the curbing of the power of Austria had been the sole aim and end of French policy. All who would strike a blow for France, by work or deed, had been brought up on this idea and were, so to speak, impregnated with it. 'What!' exclaimed d'Argenson, 'are we going to let a great event like this go by without reaping some advantage from it?' The worthy Barbier himself, recounting what he hears in the street, never lets a week go by without saying what an amazing thing it is that France does nothing, when all the rest of Europe is up and doing. If, taking his courage in both hands, Fleury gives out that he is going to respect the Pragmatic Sanction, Versailles and Paris begin to shout for war *with one accord, and brand him as a coward. A strange thing indeed to see the old man turning his gaze to the future and the younger ones still harping on an ancient, worn-out shibboleth.*

But the Anti-Austrian party must needs have a leader. To replace Chauvelin, still compelled to cool his heels at Bourges, the public manufactured another great man. They did it in six weeks. His name was Charles Louis Fouquet, Comte de Belle-Isle. For a leader of youth, he himself was not surprisingly young. But the memory of the Surintendant, his grandfather, though it retarded his fortune, had left him, in middle age, with the charm of optimism and the prestige of the unknown. To rescue himself from the depths of disfavour into which he and his whole family had fallen, he had needed prodigious ambition and indomitable courage, both moral and physical. Brave, intrepid, enigmatic, a fascinating talker, full of

ideas, an indefatigable writer, an unscrupulous speculator, soldier, scholar and financier, he could get through any door, none too square or too round to admit him; and he was gay withal, a great hand with the women, standing at the confluence of all the streams of social life. He lived on terms of perfect intimacy with a younger brother, known as the Chevalier. The latter had the same fertility of ideas as his elder brother, the same flexibility of mind, the same application, but there was not so much sap in him. He was harsher, grimmer. Still the pair of them marched step and step, shoulder to shoulder, with the most perfect accord, along the road to greatness, command, ascendancy and wealth. During the war of the Polish succession, Belle-Isle had put forward a plan for the invasion of Austria, which peace had rendered superfluous. He then applied for, and obtained, the governorship of Metz, and everyone said that he was still working away at his pet design, that he was ready to carry it into effect, that he was in regular correspondence with the German princes and that he had paved the way for his armies with a network of friendship and goodwill. The masses looked upon him as the man chosen by Providence to set the seal on the task which the great Cardinal had begun, and which the faint-hearted Fleury refused to bring to completion.

Fleury did not blench. He fronted the tempest. But the general clamour waxed greater and greater every day, finally reaching the King himself, and he at last came to the reluctant conclusion that he had better yield a little, lest he should lose the whole.

'My first impulse,' he avowed to Belle-Isle himself, 'was to do nothing, and I wanted His Majesty merely to look on, as a spectator at the scene on which the curtain is about to rise in Germany. His Majesty has got Lorraine. He has not the slightest desire to extend his frontiers and, in the country's present state, the last thing we want is a war that may drag on indefinitely. The matter has been continually in my thoughts and I have discussed it very fully with the ministers, with them alone and also in the presence of the King. They did not share my views, but, in deference to their arguments, it has been unanimously decided that we never ought to suffer the imperial crown to remain in the House of Austria if our doing so meant that it would pass into the hands of the Grand Duke (the husband of Maria Theresa, and ex-Duke of Lorraine who had been transferred to Tuscany), because the result would be that by restoring the House to its former greatness, he would employ every means that hatred and determination could suggest to force his way back into Lorraine.'

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Stated briefly, Fleury's whole idea was this, that the title of Emperor should be kept from Duke Francis and given to the Bavarian. Belle-Isle himself should preside over this transaction in his capacity as the King's ambassador to the Diet of Frankfort. Once well away from Paris, he would cease his intrigues; public opinion would get its sop, and, the struggle with England being adjourned by the recall of the squadrons, the menace of a twofold war would be dispelled in a few months.

Thus reasoned Fleury, but the current was too strong to be kept back by any of these old monkey-tricks. Far from being satisfied with their preliminary success, the anti-Austrian party were the more encouraged to follow up a course so auspiciously begun. One after another Belle-Isle wrested from the Cardinal a grant of a subsidy to the Bavarian claimant, who had been crowned under the title of Charles the Seventh, a treaty of alliance with Frederick the Second and lastly a declaration of war against Maria Theresa. Before many weeks were over, he himself led an army up to the walls of Vienna, marched into Bohemia where, by a piece of conspicuous daring, one of his lieutenants, gained possession of Prague in November, 1741.

This triumph was short-lived. Belle-Isle fell sick and a *locum tenens* had to be appointed, namely, Broglie. But the two Marshals did not see eye to eye, and as, notwithstanding his distance from the scene of action, Belle-Isle would insist on intervening in the conduct of the campaign, the operations were not as successful as they might have been. But a ruder blow was in store for us. Frederick the Second while continuing to promulgate manifestos attacking the Queen of Hungary, was eminently desirous of pulling his chestnuts out of the fire, and secretly made peace with her. On June 11th, 1742, by the Treaty of Breslau, Silesia was ceded to Prussia, but Prussia withdrew from the Coalition.

The news of Frederick's tergiversation was received in Paris with wrathful stupefaction. It meant the collapse of the anti-Austrian policy. We had wanted to boast of making an Emperor with our own hands, and all we had got for our pains was an entanglement in Germany, just when we ought to have had our hands free to throw all our forces into the struggle for maritime and colonial supremacy.

Only one Frenchman rejoiced at the situation, or, to put it more correctly, a man who was French in mind but not in heart. The self-same day on which he put his signature to the deed of betrayal, Frederick sent Voltaire a piece of what he called poetry, to the glory of the peace he had just concluded.

O paix! heureuse pais! répare sur la terre  
 Tous les maux que lui fait la destructive guerre,  
 Et que ton front, paré de renaissantes fleurs,  
 Plus que jamais serein prodigue tes faveurs!  
 Mais, quel que soit l'espoir sur lequel tu te fonde(s)  
 Pense que tu n'auras rien fait,  
 Si tu ne peux bannir deux monstres de ce monde  
 L'ambition et l'intérêt.

Voltaire forthwith responded. 'Sire, I have received some poetry, and some very charming poetry, from my adorable King at the very time we were thinking Your Majesty's whole mind was centred on delivering M. de Broglie from anxiety. . . . I learn that Your Majesty has made a very good treaty; very good for you, no doubt, for you have schooled your virtuous mind to shine in the sphere of politics. But if the treaty is a good thing for us French people, they don't seem to realise it in Paris. . . . There are a few Abbés of Saint Peter's who bless you amid the uproar. I am one of those philosophers. . . . You are not our ally any longer, Sire, but you will become the ally of the human race. . . . Have a good opera, a good theatre! May I, at Berlin, be a witness of your pleasures and your glory.'

In a second letter, Frederick the Second refined on that theme. 'The outcry of the Parisians doesn't trouble me much. They are a lot of hornets who are never tired of buzzing. Their taunts are just like the squawking of parrots; their decisions are just about as important as the decisions of monkeys would be on points of metaphysics. . . . If every other Frenchman in France condemned me, Voltaire, the philosopher, would never allow himself to be dragged along with the crowd.'

Fleury was now ninety years old. His mortifications, the war, a feeling of his own powerlessness, the consciousness of many mistakes that could not be recalled, had worn him down. For the last two years he had been given out as dying once a week. One day you would see him wasted and wan, bent and gnarled and withered, sleepless, digestion all wrong, stuffing and drenching himself with elixirs, drugs and vinegars, all but blind, all but stone deaf. It was given out that his mind was confused, that he rambled in his speech, that he forgot when night came what orders he had given in the morning. And then the very next day, he would be seen at Versailles,

brisk and keen, his beard neatly trimmed, his face filled out, and glowing with health. He would work twelve hours at a stretch and, on the Bourse, the shares of the India Company would begin to rise.

All his life long, he had played the part of the helpless valetudinarian. His years, his illness, his ecclesiastical unction, all these were the 'properties' on which he had relied to bring his ambitions to pass. Ten, nay, twenty times Walpole had been taken in by him. In his dealings with the English statesman he always posed as a martyr; he would weep and protest that he was surrounded by enemies and jealous rivals. If he were not there to hinder them, what terrible things would happen to France and to the relations between the two countries. 'Please make things easy,' he seemed to say, 'and, by not asking too much, help me to stand up against my adversaries.' And Walpole would take pity on the poor old man, never once suspecting that he was being duped.

He had played the game so often with success, that he thought he would try it yet once again. He decided he would write to Maria Theresa. He would tell her how thoroughly well-disposed he was and beseech her to help him, poor old man that he was, to send the curs back to their kennels. It was a desperate throw, but, after all why should a sentimental young woman be more difficult to cozen than a very downright, hard-bitten English politician.

But Maria Theresa full of wrath, and led away by England, turned a deaf ear to the Cardinal's supplications. In fact she handed his letter to the Gazettes and all Europe gulped it down with avidity. Fleury replied to Koenigsek with a contemptuous note – it was all he could do – which was not devoid of grandeur. Still there was nothing left to do but to fight. There was no getting away from that. In the night of December 16th-17th, Belle-Isle hemmed in in Prague managed to get through the enemy's lines and, by a perilous and skilful retreat, succeeded in getting back to the Rhine with eleven thousand men and three thousand horses. The men performed prodigies of valour. They marched by night, by the light of the moon, through woods and over snow-clad stretches, without sleep, almost without food, taking the last ounce out of themselves, leaving the weary and the wounded to die of cold or to perish by the sword. Vauvenargues was amongst them, and his health never recovered from the strain. At last, on January 2nd, 1743, Chevert, who had remained behind in the beleagured city with four thousand men, nearly all of them sick, was forced to surrender, for

lack of food. He was granted the honours of war, and was allowed to return to France with his sound companions.

On Tuesday, February 29th, Fleury died after a few days' fever. The news was conveyed to the King during a sitting of the financial council. He immediately rose and returned to his private apartments to weep for the man to whom, on the following day, he referred, in terms of tender affection as 'his friend.'—'I may say,' he wrote to Philip the Fifth, 'that I owe everything to him, and that since I had the misfortune to lose my father and mother before I knew what father and mother were, I have always looked on him as supplying their place; and so his loss is all the harder for me to bear.' Fleury had been a great minister, but, with the exception of Louis the Fifteenth, it is pretty safe to say that no one realized it. 'Cardinal de Fleury died yesterday, at last,' wrote d'Argenson, by way of panegyric. 'Never was there so comical a death, what with songs, and epigrams, and demonstrations.'

Fleury left a great gap behind him, but mindful of his predecessor's advice the King announced that he would appoint no more Prime Ministers, adding that, for the future, he would carry on the government himself, with the assistance of his Council.

The said Council met at least twice a week to deliberate on affairs of state generally. Only its members had the right to call themselves ministers, and this whether they were responsible for a department or not. Completed before Fleury died, and reconstituted a few months later, it was made up of three old members and four new ones: the Duc d'Orléans, who never attended, Orry, the Controller-General, and Maurepas the Secretary for the Navy, Cardinal de Tencin, the Comte d'Argenson, his elder brother the Marquis d'Argenson and the Marquis de Noailles.

Tencin was neither so black nor so brilliant as he was painted, but he played the strong silent man with effect, and he made the most of a smile that looked as if it had something deep behind it. His knowledge of Roman affairs was unrivalled and he had faithfully done his best in the interests of religious peace. As Archbishop of Embrun, he had made some good sound friends at Turin, that illusive centre of Italian policy. He hoped — but in vain — that a display of great reserve would enhance his reputation. The 'feuille de benefices' on which he had set his heart was bestowed elsewhere and his prestige diminished every day. He had the courage to face the situation. He retired to Lyons and lived there in greater honour than at Versailles.



Moulded by a father who was himself well versed in affairs of state, twice head of the police, intendant of Tours, and intendant of Paris, an agreeable conversationalist, in the good books of the Queen and the religious party, accustomed to the usages of high society and quite at home therein, the Comte d'Argenson was a man of brains and character. He had an immense capacity for work, an invincible determination to succeed in all he did, a thorough knowledge of, and taste for, the transaction of affairs. When he was appointed to the War Office, in succession to Breteuil, who had died of apoplexy, it was clear to everyone that he was worthy of the office and that the King could not have made a better choice.

As for d'Argenson the elder, he had only been selected because there was no likelier candidate in the field. As long as he had a breath in his body, Fleury had retained the direction of Foreign Affairs in his own hands. The titular head of the department, Amelot, had his good points, but they were humble. When there was no one there to dictate to him, he was all at sea. Louis the Fifteenth wanted to put in a professed diplomat, a man accustomed to the ins and outs of the business, with a thorough knowledge of Europe. He offered the post to Villeneuve, formerly ambassador at Constantinople, who had drawn up the Treaty of Belgrade. Villeneuve was a little old man, with a lot of fire, a lot of the devil in him, very dashing, riding the high horse and possessed of a terrific Provençal accent. And now, having arrived at the termination of a very full and eventful life, all he wanted was to finish out his few remaining days in peace. On the King's pressing him urgently to take the post, he excused himself on the ground of his years, his poor health, his lack of ambition and his family affairs. Louis the Fifteenth was still unable to make up his mind when, on the recommendation of the senior clerk in the Foreign Office, he called upon d'Argenson, who was a Councillor of State, and who had the reputation of being a man of ideas, with an eye to the future. As a matter of fact he was a mass of contradictions. He would take a fancy to every system at one and the same time, provided he could pass them off as his own. His memoirs are filled with mighty plans, all of them mutually destructive. He had but one hard and fast idea, and that was his hatred of Spain. Spain he would have liked to ensnare in every imaginable trap, the more perfidious the better. He had dreams of a European code, an Italian confederation, of France conquering the world by pure unselfishness and bringing about a reign of universal peace and

justice. The practical acts of such a man could not fail to be vain and chimerical.

The man who gained the greatest ascendancy over the King was indisputably the Maréchal de Noailles. Appointed to the command of a new army formed by Neckar out of the remnants of the troops that had succeeded in getting away from Prague, he had attempted to prevent the Austrians from forming a junction with the Anglo-Hanoverians of Lord Stair and George the Second, who had recently landed in the Low Countries and were making their way up the Rhine. He advanced boldly to meet George the Second on the Main, and would have succeeded in arresting his progress but for the rashness of one of his lieutenants who, contrary to orders, transferred to the right bank of the river, some regiments which were intended to remain on the left. Though fought at a disadvantage, the battle of Dettingen would not have resulted in a defeat (June, 1743), but that Broglie, being isolated in Bavaria, had been compelled to retire on Alsace, and Noailles, exposed in his turn, had gone to join him.

Well, ought they yet once more to attempt a march on Vienna and, uniting their several forces, re-open the campaign in Germany? Noailles, Tencin and Maurepas were all against this plan. Our real enemy was not Austria but England, whom, sooner or later, we were always sure to find in our path. Having driven Walpole from power because they suspected him of pacificism, the English had just entered into a coalition against us with Holland, Austria, Piedmont and Saxony. France had made a mistake in working for the Elector of Bavaria and the King of Prussia. A return, so far as Germanic territories were concerned, would have been made to our real traditions, and we should only appear there as protectors of the German liberties and as maintainers of the balance of power. We should turn all our forces against England, drive her from the Continent by striking at her in the place in which her alliance with Austria and Holland had put her, but in which the blow would strike home, namely in Flanders.

That was the principal theatre of events. Nevertheless war still continued on the Rhine, in Italy, at sea, and in the colonies. But in these secondary spheres there were no continuous operations. An Austrian attempt on Alsace was frustrated by a fresh intervention on the part of Frederick the Second, who was afraid to let Maria Theresa gain a decisive victory, and Louis the Fifteenth, who had hastened to Metz, found that he was not compelled to join battle.

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In India the two companies would have liked to maintain neutrality, but Commodore Bartlett having seized some French vessels off the coast of Sumatra, Dupleix asked for help from the Governor of the Isles of France and Bourbon, La Bourdonnais. The latter was expecting reinforcements from France which never arrived. When he did start, it was too late. He arrived off Ceylon in July, 1746, with nine vessels mounting three hundred guns; but by that time the Company had lost nearly all its ships. One after another, they had fallen into the hands of the English. Dupleix, however, had long been preparing to strike a blow at Madras and he had secretly collected all the material requisite for the purpose. At last, after a lot of persuasion, he succeeded in winning over La Bourdonnais to the scheme. Madras, attacked by land and sea, surrendered without a blow (September 21st), but basing his action on some hazy instructions, which anyhow were five years old, La Bourdonnais made an arrangement with Morse, the Governor of the place, the terms of which were nothing less than scandalous. According to this agreement, the town was to be restored to the English against delivery of bills payable in London and maturing over a considerable period of time. Dupleix rightly considered that it was his business, and no one else's, to dictate terms. He refused to associate himself with La Bourdonnais' actions and threatened to cashier him. The quarrel nearly developed into a pitched battle. The two men had been acquainted for a long time and they hated each other. Dupleix did not hesitate to say that La Bourdonnais had had his palm oiled by the English, and it is eminently probable that it was so. At length fresh orders arrived from Paris. La Bourdonnais' fleet was dispersed by a cyclone and he returned to the Ile de Bourbon. Dupleix was thus left master of the situation, but with only his own forces to rely on. Not only did he keep Madras, but with five hundred men, three hundred of whom were Sepoys, he routed ten thousand Moors who were in alliance with the English, and then, being himself besieged in Pondicherry by Admiral Boscawen, compelled the enemy to fall back with the loss of thirteen hundred men. At sea, the English maintained almost everywhere the upper hand, but they failed to profit by their advantage. They were badly distributed; their commanders were more of politicians than admirals, and all they did was to engage in a few operations that were as ill-conceived as they were barren of importance. They did not avail to prevent the revictualling of the West Indies, those veritable pirates' nests. An attempted landing to the north of

Lorient was a failure and when the list of gains and losses came to be made up, it was found that, though the English had captured some three thousand five hundred French and Spanish trading vessels, we, on our side, had taken more than three thousand of theirs.

The sporadic nature of the events shows clearly enough that, on both sides, the means employed were inadequate to the importance of the stakes that were being played for. Taken on the whole, the war was carried on in haphazard fashion, without any sort of co-ordination between the several plans adopted in the respective continents. The upshot of the whole thing was that, if the war was to be fought to a finish, that finish would have to be fought out in Belgium, that battle-field of the ages, the cockpit of Europe. To restore confidence to the troops and to tighten up the discipline, Louis the Fifteenth had himself taken command of his army. In 1744 he took Courtrai, Menin, Ypres and Furnes. In 1745, Maurice de Saxe, an illegitimate son of the King of Poland, who had taken service with France, crushed the Anglo-Dutch combination at Fontenoy – this was in May. The battle began at six o'clock in the morning. The French front was covered by three redoubts. Dragging their guns along by hand, the English formed a compact body of twenty thousand men who advanced against the French lines in wedge formation, like the prow of a vessel. They came along slowly, a massive, intrepid phalanx, firing low and firing rapidly. The regiment of Aubeterre, the French Guards, the Switzers, the regiment of Hainaut, the regiment of Normandy, the regiment of marines all did their best to disintegrate the formidable mass, and they all gave way before it. At length Cumberland came within range of our guns, which began to shell his men; they wavered, and Maurice de Saxe took advantage of their confusion to order a general attack. In ten minutes a breach had been made in the assaulting column on every side. The King's household troops flung themselves into the gap. The English sounded the retreat and fell back in disorder leaving more than nine thousand dead on the field. This famous victory won us Tournai, Ghent, Bruges, Oudenarde and Ostend. At the close of the same year, the Pretender, Charles Edward, landed unexpectedly in Scotland, rallied the clansmen of the Highlands to his banner, took Edinburgh and, scoring victory upon victory, pushed his advance to within thirty leagues of London. For a moment the Whigs deemed that the Hanoverian dynasty was doomed. But the Pretender's hurriedly formed, undisciplined levies were unable to hold their own against

the regular troops that had been recalled from Flanders, and at Culloden, in April, 1746, they suffered an overwhelming defeat. Charles Edward himself, compelled to take to flight, made good his escape through every kind of danger.

France had only been able to render him insignificant assistance. But Maurice de Saxe, profiting by Cumberland's departure, resumed the campaign, the winter notwithstanding.

While he was thought to be merely on pleasure bent, he threw six columns on Brussels and took the city by surprise. That was in February. In October he was again victorious over the Austrians at Raucoux, and in July, 1747, he defeated the combined forces of the English and Dutch at Laufeldt. The invasion of Holland seemed imminent. Furthermore, the Emperor Charles the Seventh having died, it was open to the Archduke Francis, the husband of Maria Theresa, to claim the Imperial Crown, and it looked as if a deal might be possible. D'Argenson had totally failed to come to terms with the Dutch and the Piedmontese. He had let them throw dust in his eyes, and the sum-total of his negotiations had been to hamper the soldiers without any other result than to make them lose their time. On the other hand he had detached Saxony from its alliance with Austria, and arranged a marriage between the Dauphin and a niece of Maurice de Saxe. It was clear that no one party was strong enough to impose its will entirely on another. All the belligerents were tired, and anxious to see an end to their costly and interminable war. D'Argenson, who, contrary to all dictates of common sense, persisted in pursuing his dangerous anti-Spanish policy, was dismissed. His place was filled by a rather sharp-witted little man named Puysceulx, sometime ambassador at Naples, who was appointed plenipotentiary for the conduct of the peace-negotiations. With him was associated the Comte Saint Severin d'Aragon, a man well-versed in intrigue, and the Congress opened at Aix-la-Chapelle in April, 1748.

It was arranged that the *Status quo ante bellum* should be re-established by the reciprocal restitution of all conquered territory. France was to get back Louisburg, England Madras, and the Queen of Hungary the Low Countries. Archduke Francis was acknowledged Emperor; France undertook to expel the Pretender, Charles Stuart, and England was to retain for four more years her commercial privileges in South America. On the other hand, Austria was to cede Silesia to Frederick, and to hand over to Don Philip, Louis the Fifteenth's son-in-law, the Duchies of Parma and Piacenza.

To begin with, the peace was welcomed in France with accla-

mations of joy. Barbier, a trustful observer of the sentiments of the general public in Paris, remarks that, of all the combatants, France had the most to lose from a prolongation of hostilities, because, England being invulnerable owing to her insular position, she ran a risk, even if she were victorious in Holland, of suffering the total extinction of her trade and the ruin of her colonial enterprises. But gradually it became apparent that our negotiations had failed to obtain any *quid pro quo* for the evacuation of the Low Countries, and the Treaty was held up as a masterpiece of ineptitude. The expulsion of Prince Edward, who was rudely arrested as he was leaving the Opera, aroused the public's indignation.

Peuple jadis si fier, aujourd'hui si servile,  
Des princes malheureux vous n'êtes plus l'asile.  
Vos ennemis vaincus aux champs de Fontenoy  
A leurs propres vainqueurs ont imposé la loi,  
Et cette indigne paix qu'Aragon vous procure  
Est pour eux un triomphe et pour vous une injure.

In point of fact it was Frederick who reaped the greatest advantage from the Treaty. All we had gained from our obstinacy in pursuing a policy that would have been opportune fifty years before, was that we had augmented the power of Prussia and destroyed the equilibrium of Europe. The ambitions which, in years gone by, we had prevented Austria from realising, it was now in Frederick's power to revive. If France persisted in her anti-Austrian policy, she was doing his work, to the prejudice of the smaller States who were her customers and allies. If she reversed her policy, she was incurring the enmity of the strongest military power in Europe next to herself, and involving herself in the personal grievances of Maria Theresa, who refused to acquiesce in the loss of Silesia. By any calculation, England, who was bound by no pact, was certain to find an auxiliary in Europe. That was the price we had to pay for listening to the out-of-date Belle-Isle, instead of remaining quietly on Mont Pagnotte. In giving way to public opinion, the King and his government had been guilty of a grave dereliction of duty. But this weakness only served to lend an added zest to the discussion of events in the saloons, the cafés, and the public prints, and to increase their influence. Since the so-called Peace was but a truce, leaving everything in suspense, it needed no great perspicacity to foresee that we should enter upon the second phase of the struggle with diminished chances of emerging from it with success.

## CHAPTER VIII

# FRANCE CAN BE HAPPY WITHOUT QUEBEC

'THE middle of this century,' wrote d'Alembert, 'will mark an epoch in the history of the human mind by reason of the revolution which seems about to take place in human ideas.' It was, in fact, round about 1750 that there appeared some of the most important works of the age. Montesquieu published *l'Esprit des Loix* in 1748; Buffon the first volume of his *Histoire naturelle* in 1749; Rousseau the *Discours sur les sciences et les arts* in 1750, and the *Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité* in 1755; Voltaire, le *Siècle de Louis XIV* in 1751, and the *Essai sur les Mœurs* in 1756, Diderot the first volume of the Encyclopaedia in 1751, and, lastly Condillac, the *Traité des sensations* in 1754. Those whom, for lack of a better term, we still call the Philosophers, were, in fact, a very heterogeneous collection, comprising atheists and deists, and sharply divided by personal rivalry and antagonism. But they all agreed in a common hatred of 'fanaticism' and tradition, and in a common determination to judge society, its laws and its customs, by the standard of an abstract ideal.

The philosophers did not remain isolated units. Voltaire urged them to form themselves into a 'body of initiates'. 'Bring the little flock together' he wrote, in a letter to d'Alembert. 'Courage; form yourselves into a body, messieurs, a body always commands respect. Club together and you'll get the upper hand. I am talking to you as a republican. Well there's such a thing as the Republic of Letters!' This republic was not a figment of the imagination. It really existed. It was a live thing. It was an organised sect which increased from year to year. It had its dogmas and formularies, its strongholds, its regiments. Slowly but surely it enveloped the kingdom in a close network of salons, academies, lodges, literary societies, and reading-circles. After a struggle lasting fifteen years, it annexed the Academy. On the eve of the Revolution, every town had its garrison of thinkers and its intellectual centre. From one end of France to the other, there was a perpetual exchange of brochures, letters, addresses, proposals and resolutions. On all hands, the philosophers, with one mind and one method, devoted themselves

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to the one identical task of criticism and discussion. From time to time there were gatherings on a large scale for the grand manœuvres, for some big 'affair,' or other, some legal or political business. There would be an attack on the clergy, on the Court, or on some free lance author or other, who had imagined he was just attacking an ordinary coterie, just like any other and then awoke to the fact that he had a whole army against him. 'It cannot be gainsaid,' said Joly de Fleury, in the charge he brought in 1759 against Helvetius, 'that there is a concerted plan, an organization called into being for the express purpose of upholding the gospel of materialism and fomenting moral corruption.' We need not go into the Advocate-General's views. It is enough that he registers the fact.

Do not let us make a mistake. The Republic of Letters was not identical with public opinion. It was the means employed by the philosophers to mould public opinion to their will. With their clubs and their propaganda, they brought their influence to bear on various organised institutions. With their books, with their brilliant wit and cynicism, they sowed the seeds of doubt and discouragement in the breasts of their adversaries. Now, if there was one point on which, in their inmost hearts, they were agreed, it was that colonies were not only useless, but dangerous. These so-called enlightened thinkers completely failed to recognise the great desire for colonial expansion which was the dominant factor of the age. They were blind alike to its origin and its strength. With all the means at their command, they opposed and hampered it. They denied its greatness, they decried its necessity. Without the smallest hesitation, they belittled the colonies, defamed the colonists, ridiculed their efforts and caricatured their labours with contemptuous buffoonery. No doubt, we read a great deal in the works of the philosophers about Persians, Iroquois, Hurons, Peruvians, Malabars, Turks, Moguls, Sultans and Chinamen; but all these exotic trimmings were but a means to an end. All these disingenuous *ingénus* are but the Parisians of 1750, who liked to play the primitive man without foregoing the comforts of civilization and who employed all the resources of their mind in casting ridicule on the graces of urbanity and culture.

In their anti-colonial campaign, the philosophers occasionally condescended to make an exception in favour of certain plantations whence France obtained those tropical products with which her own soil could not supply her and where government enterprise was limited to the building and upkeep of a few fortified residences for the convenience and safety of her traders. The *Esprit des Lois*



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contains a fine panegyric of the West Indies, and, in the course of his correspondence, Voltaire refers several times, and with enthusiasm, to the India Company. It is true that he had some shares in it and was by no means indifferent to its dividends. But as a general rule the colonies did not get a good word. Montesquieu, who was in a much better position to speak his mind without reserve, had gathered together, within a few pages of his *Lettres Persanes*, all the arguments which, for fifty years to come, were to furnish the stock-in-trade of the anti-colonial controversialist. 'The ordinary effect of colonies,' he says, 'is to weaken the country from which the settlers are drawn, without adding to the strength of the country in which they establish their home. Men ought to stop where they are.' Thus opens the case for the prosecution. 'When,' he goes on, 'we are transported into a country other than our own, our health is adversely affected. Even if these colonies are a success, they merely split up a nation's strength; they do not increase it. An empire may be compared to a tree the branches of which, if permitted to grow beyond a certain point, absorb all the sap from the trunk and are good for nothing but to make a shade.'

In his *Fragments sur l'Inde*, Voltaire expatiates on the same theme. 'The only thing Europeans have ever done in America is to lay it waste and to water it with their blood. In return for that, they get cocoa, indigo, sugar and quinine. . . It is to furnish the tables of the citizens of London, Paris and other great cities with richer and rarer foods than ever princes were nourished on; to load the wives of ordinary folk with more diamonds than ever decked a queen at her coronation; to be for ever poisoning our nostrils with an evil-smelling powder; to take it into our heads to drink liquors which our ancestors did very well without – it is for all this that a vast trade has been called into being which, to three-fourths of Europe, does far more harm than good. And it is to foster and foment this trade that the powers have gone to war. The first gun that is fired over here sets all the batteries in America and farthest Asia blazing away at each other with inexhaustible fury.' Rousseau includes colonisation, together with trade, manufactures, the arts and sciences, the whole apparatus of civilization, in one wholesale condemnation.' 'The savage state,' he says, 'is the real youth of the world. All subsequent modes of progress have been, in appearance, so many steps towards individual perfection, but, in reality, towards racial decay.' In the *Supplément au voyage de Bougainville*, Diderot puts into the mouth of the Tahitian Orou a diatribe against European

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vices and ambitions, and concludes by calling on those pernicious and ambitious men to decamp with what speed they may. Bernardin de Saint Pierre himself says in the preface to his *Voyage en Ile de France*, 'I shall deem I have rendered my country a valuable service, if I prevent a single good man from leaving it.'

Canada was the bugbear, *par excellence*, of the *intelligentsia*. All the space which the Encyclopædia allotted to it was a dozen paltry lines. In the *Essai sur les Mœurs*, the *Précis du Siècle de Louis XIV*, *Candide*, the *Fragments sur l'Inde*, the *Correspondance*, he reverts to it scores of times with a great show of derogatory epithets, talking of tracts of snow, frozen deserts, dreary wildernesses, barren wastes. 'Canada cost a lot and brought in little. . . . By trying to keep it going, we have wasted a hundred years of toil and money – all gone beyond recall.' – 'Two or three Normandy traders, with the frail hope of doing a little business in furs, fitted out some ships, and established a colony in Canada, a land covered with snow and ice eight months out of the twelve, and inhabited by savages, bears and beavers. . . . Nevertheless, this wretched country is the cause of endless fighting, either with the natives, or with the English. The expenses we incur in our endeavour to hold on to the place, amount to far more than it will ever be worth.' – 'Perhaps, one day, if there are millions more people than are wanted in France, it may be a good thing to take some of them out to Louisiana; but it looks much more as if we should have to abandon the place.' – 'I wish Canada was at the bottom of the Arctic.' – 'France can do very well without Quebec.'

In the kingdom of Louis the Fifteenth the sovereign did not govern alone. The King and the Republic of Letters divided the power between them. But though the King may have been a coloniser, the Republic was not. The King defended Canada, the Republic denounced it. The King desired a larger France, the Republic quite a small one. The King looked ahead, the Republic looked behind. Now, a Prince can do nothing without his people. How was Louis the Fifteenth going to start a great Canadian emigration campaign, when the leading writers of the day unanimously declared that the place was worthless and that it had no future? How was he to excite emulation and enthusiasm in favour of a France Beyond the Seas, when the bulk of middle-class people had had their minds poisoned against it by a propaganda as perfidious as it was persistent? How was he to impose the necessary sacrifices on the country, when his schemes were paralysed by a passive opposition that

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was well-nigh universal? To have succeeded in keeping a colonial empire in the teeth of all the active and efficient elements in the nation, would have been nothing short of a miracle. It was in Paris, and not at Quebec and Pondicherry that the fate of our colonies was sealed. And here is a humiliating coincidence; this same France who was loth to believe that she had any genius for colonising, now counted among her sons the greatest colonial of all time, Jean François Dupleix.

Dupleix was born on January 1st, 1697, at Landrecies, where his father held a minor government appointment. Of his childhood and adolescence we know nothing, or next to nothing. At nine, we find him attending the Jesuit college at Quimper as a day-boy and there he remained till 1713. Two years later, he was an ensign on board a vessel trading with India. We come across him at Nantes, Saint Malo, and Paris without, however, being able to discover how long he remained in these various places, or how he managed to live. It is even possible that he got in a visit to America. Sometime during this period, his father became associated with the tobacco business, first as manager of a tobacco factory, and subsequently as a tobacco farmer. Tobacco farming was then more or less dependent on the Compagnie des Indes. Through his father's influence, Dupleix, at the age of twenty-five obtained a position as adviser and commissary-general to the troops at Pondicherry. And then the veil comes down again. Dupleix doubtless acquitted himself with credit in connection with the various subordinate duties which fell to his lot. But even then, not a few little incidents suggest that he had already developed that overbearing and masterful disposition which tended to render him, in the sequel, so unpopular with his colleagues and chiefs. Notwithstanding this, he was appointed, in 1731, to a directorship at Chandernagore. The Company encouraged its employees to trade on their own account. In his new post, Dupleix showed himself an able and enterprising administrator. He increased the trade of the port, did well for the shareholders, and better still for himself. At length he married a young and penniless widow with a long family. When, in 1741, Dumas departed, he was appointed governor, and went into residence at Pondicherry early in 1742.

To assist us in forming a judgment of his character and disposition, we have little to go on but his letters. From the start he reveals himself as a somewhat rough and heavy handed person. He was not a man who dealt in the finer subtleties or the more delicate

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shades of meaning. His jokes, though not vulgar, were not distinguished for their lightness and elegance. He lacked charm and adaptability. When, in order to gain his object, a few unimportant concessions might have been useful, he always refused to grant them, or even to consider them. Putting duty before everything himself, he was intolerant of shortcomings in others. If he had reason to find fault with any of his colleagues or assistants, he spared them no reproaches, no irony. 'Wretches', 'knaves', – the harshest epithets welled from his pen with amazing facility. But his brusqueness, his stiffnecked nature was but the over-plusage of the most glowing virtues: Reverence for justice, love of country, longanimity, loyalty to principle. No one ever charged him with misusing his power. Holding that men were more effectively governed by deeds than by theories, he constrained his staff to model themselves on his example and to treat the natives with consideration. He conceived a very lofty view of his office, with the result that he was never blinded by the pride that is born of facile success. Before taking sides, or coming to a decision, he would carefully listen to all that had to be said. He never issued a command without consulting his council and without long and anxious consideration. He was a man of alert and of powerful intellect, an intellect rather prone to materialism, but enriched by wide reading and profound meditation. In action, he was as stubborn as he was bold, impossible to discourage, a leader of men, a born soldier, a diplomat, a man of moderating influence, one marked out by destiny to command.

M. Alfred Martineau, a Professor at the *Collège de France* and an ex-governor of the French possessions in India, has devoted to Dupleix a work in five volumes in which he establishes with great force and clearness that Dupleix did not derive his policy of political intervention from any theoretical, *a priori*, ideas about colonization. It was borne in upon him gradually, as a result of contact with hard facts, and adopted by him as circumstances rendered it expedient. When, in 1753, Dupleix decided to furnish formal exposition of his doctrine, his recall had already been decided upon, and the death-blow delivered to his work. In short, it was to the events which occurred in the neighbourhood of Pondicherry during the War of Succession, that Dupleix owed the revelation of the extraordinary weakness of the local rulers. He already had an inkling, but no certain knowledge, of the worthlessness of their troops and the futility of their governmental machinery. And then the victories which he won with a handful of men over armies a hundred times as numerous,

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unfolded an illimitable prospect to his imagination. On the other hand, the Company's Finances were controlled from in Paris and the Indian branches could only make their purchases by means of funds remitted to them from France. Over and over again, the vessels had been held up, *en route*, and then the funds were lacking. Failing to get their pay, employees and soldiers had refused to carry on. 'No pay, no piper,' said the senior officers. To keep them from deserting, Dupleix had been known to spend his own money and pledge his own credit. Two or three times he had been on the verge of ruin, and the Company with him. Calculations and practical experience had shown him that trade in tropical produce was less profitable than was commonly supposed. The Company had to bear very heavy over-head expenses, and the fear of lowering prices continually stood in the way of increasing the volume of imports. Thus Dupleix came to the conclusion that 'it (the Company) could not support itself solely on the profits of its trade,' and that it would be necessary for it to have in India itself, 'a regular; fixed income,' rents, taxes, monopolies, privileges, tribute, paid by the potentates whom they conquered or assisted. Until now they had been satisfied with occupying a few fortified places, the maintenance and defence of which were often the more costly as trading business could not be transacted there without the payment of customs dues and toll-fees levied by the local rulers. The protection of a more extensive territory would add neither to the difficulties nor to the expenses. As to the costs of the war, they would be defrayed progressively out of the profits of victory and the booty that fell into their hands. What it really came to was that the Company would have dominion over a territory which it could already have had for its own at the price of a little daring and perseverance.

Two native States occupied nearly the whole of the Indian peninsula south of Godavery: the Deccan and the Carnatic; the former to the North, the latter to the South East, the former near Bombay and the Mahrattas, the latter close to Pondicherry and in a state of vassalage to the former. The Deccan and the Carnatic were bones of contention among divers rival princes, who are claimed the territory by right of inheritance and whose claims all had, more or less, something to be said for them. Two of the rivals appealed to Dupleix to espouse their cause. He put some of his officers and troops at their disposal, vanquished their rivals, and, in exchange for services rendered, required them to recognise his protectorate. But Dupleix had erred by excess of optimism. He was continually

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hampered by a lack of the sinews of war. The English began to get anxious about their trade, and took sides with the princes the French had dispossessed. Thus, under cover, as it were, of their respective customers, there came to exist a state of war between the two countries, a war which was none the less bitter because it was indirect. In the course of it, the European troops, in the guise of auxiliaries, fought strenuously against one another, at the same time keeping up the fiction of being at peace. The military operations became increasingly burdensome. If, in the Deccan, where we were constantly victorious, the assets easily exceeded the liabilities, in the Carnatic, where the conflict was never-ending, the deficit reached several million livres, which Dupleix was obliged to raise either by means of loans, or by making inroads on his own personal resources. Dupleix counted on bringing off a decisive result before the English had time to carry out any effective intervention. For that, he would have needed, from the very outset, a far larger force than the two or three thousand men he had at his disposal. The logical consequence was that he could not succeed unless his policy were previously known to and approved by the Company in France, since they, and they alone, provided the men and the money. Thus we find ourselves back again at the same point. How should Dupleix have found any effective backing in Paris, when he and his enterprises were looked on with the indifference or hostility, and when his own directors openly proclaimed that they entirely disapproved of meddling with the affairs of the natives?

With a heroism which we cannot too greatly extol, Dupleix resolved to take the matter into his own hands and to embark on the task alone. When certain unexpected complications arose, and he found himself involved in a real war that bade fair to last a long time, it was too late to go and tell the Company what he had done and to ask their approval. The troops were moving, and so was time, and it would take more than a year to get an answer back from France. When, some time afterwards, he was called upon to justify this prolongation of hostilities, he constantly attempted to put the best face on things, concealing his difficulties, minimizing his reverses and announcing that a prompt and profitable peace was even now at hand. Moreover, the Company was not very consistent in its opposition. It did not direct Dupleix to restore the territories he had annexed. As long as he was victorious, the Company was content to enjoy the comforting sensation of success, deprecating the favours of Fortune with a coyness that really implied their

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grateful acceptance of them. For three years, the Company sat on the fence, very nervous lest it should get too deeply involved. They told Dupleix to come to terms as soon as possible, and, at the same time, largely increased his reinforcements, but not sufficiently to ensure him a decisive superiority over his adversaries. All through, and right to the bitter end, his genius made up for all defects, all shortcomings. Thoroughly understanding the mentality of the native, knowing at once how to dazzle and to intimidate, gorgeous as a sultan out of the *Arabian Nights*, splendidly backed up by his wife, he carried on the struggle 'with unwearying confidence, marvellous tenacity, and a tact that never erred. He never lost heart, even when the situation seemed most desperate and, in some respects, he may justly be compared to Napoleon, whose gigantic conceptions he anticipated in thus challenging the foe on a field that was vaster than Europe itself.' It is doubtless a rash thing to indulge in conjectures as to what might have happened if circumstances had been different, but surely it is fairly safe to opine that Dupleix would have been victorious in the end, if only he had been able to put in command of his troops two leaders worthy of the name. Alas, he had but one, Bussy, who commanded in the Deccan. The men on whom he had to rely in the Carnatic were lacking in intelligence, in perspicacity and in daring. Realizing their defects, Dupleix endeavoured to make up for them by deluging them with frequent and most minute instructions. Every day, and sometimes twice a day, he wrote to them telling them what they ought to do. The only result was to complete the unhappy men's bewilderment. People called Dupleix a meddler. If he had left things alone, they would have called him negligent. He judged men on their merits. When he saw a man, a real man, he knew his worth. He was unstinting in the trust he put in Bussy, and, aristocrat though he was, he gave him a free hand in everything he did. He told him what he wanted done, and left him to get on with it. Not only did Bussy subdue the Deccan by a successful surprise attack, but he held it for seven years, and won the affections of the inhabitants into the bargain. To assert his dominion over several millions of native Indians, he had but nine hundred men all told. He maintained his authority by observing a policy that was at once cautious and clear-sighted, firm yet flexible. Though he abstained from harassing the Rajah and his ministers with over many audiences, he made them conscious, in all matters of importance, of the iron hand in the velvet glove. He was eminently successful in his dealings with the native rulers

and, though he never allowed himself to be hoodwinked, he contrived to treat them with a deference which pleasantly titillated their self-importance. He so managed things as to make them appear the originators of actions which he himself inspired, and, by flattering their *amour propre*, he gilded the pill which he invited them to swallow. Though his own tastes were of the simplest, he cheerfully surrounded himself with an elaborate ceremonial whose magnificence, though he derided it in secret, was not without its effect upon the multitude. 'Trust me,' he said in a letter to Dupleix, 'as you would trust one who, both from gratitude and inclination, is devoted to your interests. Your lofty sentiments have caused the germ of honour that was latent in me to develop and to bloom, and this principle it is that is my one and only guide to-day.'

Dupleix replied to him as follows: 'Be of good cheer, my dear Bussy; you are carrying everything through with seemliness and dignity. The work could not have fallen into better hands. I thank you with all my heart for what you have done, and I beg you to continue on the same lines. Nothing could lend a more glorious lustre to the reign of our beloved lord, the King. Everything you say about the glory which will redound to the King and the nation is very true, and if credit is due to me for the inception of the idea, what honour do you not deserve for putting it into execution!'

But in the Carnatic, where the English were lucky enough to enjoy the services of two men of first-rate military capacity, Clive and Lawrence, Dupleix had no one to oppose them but the veriest nonentity, Law of Lauriston, who was always a day behind the fair, always caught napping, always unlucky. Law allowed himself to be completely hypnotized by the enemy. When laying siege to Trichinopoly, he obligingly lent himself to the very manœuvres which the relieving army hoped he would adopt, that is to say, he struck camp and took refuge in the island of Srirangan, where Clive proceeded to blockade him. Instead of evading the danger by beating a hurried retreat, Law sent in his resignation and waited till his successor should come and relieve him. With all speed, Dupleix dispatched his brother-in-law, d'Auteuil, with a small body of troops. By the time he arrived, however, Law had surrendered, bag and baggage. His total force – six hundred Europeans, with guns, ammunition and a quantity of stores fell into the hands of the English (June, 1752). D'Auteuil, helpless with his two or three dozen men, made a fruitless attempt to get away. Dupleix when the news of the disaster reached him, displayed admirable courage and resolution.



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He took steps to secure the safety of Pondicherry, hampered the progress of the English, sowed discord between them and their native allies, and, though he brought off no decisive victory, managed to resume the offensive in almost every quarter. If the garrison of Trichinopoly was not so near starvation as he gave out, and if one convoy out of every two contrived, somehow, to reach its destination, it was nevertheless a fact that, on their side, Clive and Lawrence had to give up the notion that they were going to have matters all their own way. At last, Dupleix had discovered a real leader in Mainville who, though he could not hold a candle to Bussy, was infinitely superior to Law and his other predecessors.

But the news about Sriringam reaching Paris by way of London, threw the Board into a regular panic. When Dupleix's report came to hand two or three months later, no one would credit a word of it. For some time the Governor had been accused of hushing-up the real position, and of telling lies wholesale in order to involve the Company in schemes which, though inimical to its own interests, enabled him to feather his nest in the most outrageous fashion. Dupleix only found one man to take his part, and that was the Prince de Conti, the Chief of Louis the Fifteenth's secret cabinet. Conti no doubt reflected the ideas of his master. But the Secretary of State for the Navy and the Controller-General were for the Company, whose watchword was, 'Trade, Trade, nothing but Trade; no victories, no conquests, but plenty of goods and fatter dividends!' In March, 1753, there was talk of sending an official investigator to India to examine things on the spot. In August, Godeheu, a member of the Board, was appointed to the post. Voltaire describes him as a level-headed, steady-going business man. At last, in October, when the ships, which were supposed to have left India in February, had not yet arrived, the ministers, having reached the limits of their patience, decided to get the King to sign an order recalling Dupleix. It was not Dupleix's fault, however, that the vessels were late. He had dispatched them at the usual time, but owing to a fatal conjunction of circumstances, they had all put in at the Ile de France for repairs. Godeheu set sail on December 31st, on board the *Duc de Bourgogne*. Five other ships, carrying in all sixteen hundred troops, sailed with him. Thus Dupleix was recalled just as they were sending him out the means to achieve the victory for which he had been striving.

At Pondicherry, Godeheu did precisely what everyone expected he would do. He went through the accounts, audited the books,

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rummaged about in all the drawers, piled up report on report, and dealt with Dupleix pretty much as a tallow-chandler might have been expected to treat a conqueror. That done, he came to an arrangement with the English, that is to say he agreed to all their demands. The Company consented gradually to restore all its conquests, and to refrain for the future from entering into native alliances, or assuming native dignities (December, 1754).

Dupleix died ten years later, ruined by incautious speculation. He had been unable to obtain repayment of the money he had so lavishly spent in his endeavour to provide France with an empire. And one year after that, Godeheu published an outrageous 'Life' of him. Malignity, imposture, deceit, disloyalty, perfidiousness, such were some of the qualities ascribed to Dupleix by Godeheu, who accused him of having inebriated himself with Asiatic splendours, of harbouring resentment, of inconsequent and absurd behaviour, of pompous grandiloquence and ridiculous spite. Such were the ingredients of which Godeheu compounded his character of Dupleix. And having done his work, the tallow-chandler purred with satisfaction. 'As for me, I never raised my eyes to the sublime eminences at which he aimed; I never dreamt of such an unheard-of scheme as that of turning a trading company into a conquering army, entrusting it with the destinies of a quarter of the globe, humbling sovereigns before it, and bringing kingdoms beneath its sway. . . . I have attended to humble details which Monsieur Dupleix despised as being beneath his dignity. My conduct has been endorsed by my superiors. . . . Should it not equally deserve the approbation of my fellow citizens?'

The name of Godeheu has come to stand for the most inspissated imbecility, the imbecility that masquerades under the guise of prudence and common sense. But, at all events, the King did at last take over Dupleix's debts in order, as the Procurator-General expressed it, to invest his memory with the honour which the lustre of his glorious deeds shed over his life.

If the ministers of 1753 had recalled Dupleix, not merely in order to conform to the mercantile character of the Company, but also to ensure peace, it must soon have been borne in upon them that their sacrifice had been in vain. In the rivalry between the French and the British, one or other of the adversaries would have to go under. Either it was a case of knuckling under all along the line, and once for all, or it was useless to give up a portion here, in order to hang on

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to a portion there. What reason was there, in point of fact, why hostilities should have ceased on the borders of Louisiana, when all the causes which had originally provoked them, were still operative? In their progress towards the interior, the English again came up against the line of French outposts, and so the struggle was renewed for the possession of the disputed roads and markets. However, as it turned out, the conflict in no long time became localised in the valley of the Ohio, that being the principal centre of Indian trade, and the direct route from Canada to the Mississippi. The big Virginian estate-owners, such as the Lees, the Fairfaxes and the Washingtons, formed an association to which the British government granted a concession of one hundred thousand acres, which did not belong to them. The Governor of Canada, La Galissonnière, immediately notified the planters that they were on French territory, and, in order to establish the sovereign rights of the French King, his envoys placed pieces of lead stamped with the fleur-de-lis in divers spots beneath the soil, many of which were not discovered until long afterwards. These measures had little effect. The new Governor, Duquesne, then made up his mind to drive out the British traders, and to construct a line of forts from the St. Lawrence to the Ohio, between which a little mobile column would, from time to time, establish connection. There was Fort Presqu'île on Lake Erie and Forts Le Boeuf and Machault on the track leading from Lake Erie to the Forts of the Ohio. Duquesne's activities caused no little commotion in the English settlements, but they were still very much divided among themselves. The majority looked coldly on the enterprise of the Virginians, and they would have been by no means inconsolable if they and their company had come to grief. At the Albany congress, the delegates, after a good deal of trouble agreed on a concerted plan of action, but when it came up for ratification, they disowned it, one and all.

It was the aristocrats of Virginia who once again made war inevitable. To start with, they resolved to build a fort at the forks of the Ohio. The Canadians caught their men at work, drove them off and, on the selfsame spot, erected the stronghold known as Fort Duquesne, the early ancestor of Pittsburg. To oust the French, the Virginians raised a militia of one hundred and twenty men who were put under the command of young Washington, a great, clumsy lad, heavy of feature, frame and intellect. He was the youngest son of the family and, up to then, had gained his living as a surveyor. But the death of a half-brother had made him wealthy and he had attained some

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prominence among the freemasons. When, the previous year, he had been sent as ambassador to the Commandant of Fort Le Boeuf to call on him to evacuate the region, he had been most courteously received and had profited by the confidence reposed in him by the French Officer, 'to note all the measurements of the Fort and to take in as much as he possibly could.' When, on this second occasion, he came back, it was not as a spying diplomat, but a soldier. In the woods, he surprised and attacked a French detachment under Captain Jumonville, who was coming to meet him in order to hold a parley. While Jumonville was shouting out who he was and what he wanted, and brandishing his letter of credit, Washington ordered his men to fire. Jumonville fell, and almost all his men were killed, wounded or taken prisoner. Divers reasons have been advanced to explain Washington's conduct on this occasion. Not one of them will hold water. The manner in which the American had been received at Fort Le Boeuf should have told him how to comport himself. Later on he may have displayed great qualities. On this occasion, he behaved like an assassin. A month later he himself was besieged by Jumonville's own brother, Coulon de Villiers, who, having taken possession of his flag, arms and provisions, generously sent him back to his family and his sugar-canes. But Washington had previously agreed to the terms of surrender which his conqueror had presented to him for signature. The document ran thus: 'As it has never been our intention to disturb the peace and harmonious relations which exist between the two friendly princes, but merely to avenge the death of one of our officers, who was bearing a message and who, together with his escort, was assassinated; and also to prevent any foreign settlement on the territory of the King, my master; we are, in view of these considerations, willing to show mercy to all the English in the above-named fort.' Washington afterwards alleged that he had signed the paper without knowing what it was about. Nevertheless he was accompanied by a special interpreter, and even if we allow that a few words may have been inaccurately translated for him, it is difficult to believe that he did not understand the general sense of the document. Such a supposition is rendered the less credible by the fact that, at his command, the interpreter had requested that certain modifications in the wording should be inserted. In a moment of panic, it may be, but still realizing clearly enough what he was about, Washington unquestionably put his signature to an acknowledgment of his wrongdoing and his usurpation (1754).

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And now for some time to come his prestige had been at a hopelessly low ebb. The Pennsylvanians jeered at one who, for all the grand airs he gave himself, had met with such a pitiable reverse. His fellow-countrymen could not but admit that the French now possessed a semi-official acknowledgment of the rights which hitherto they had steadily denied them. All the same, neither the aristocrats nor the freemasons, gave up the fight. In his journals, Franklin put up a terrific fight for Washington and the War policy. The concessionaires of America passed the word across to their English cousins. The Planters set their correspondents in motion, as well as their shippers and their bankers. The alarm spread from group to group. If ever a war was wilfully provoked by the English capitalists, this one was. They imposed it on France, on Europe, and on the whole world.

The murder of Jumonville filled Paris with amazement and indignation, but still the government clung to its policy of peace. After making a *pro forma* protest, Rouille, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, had instructed the French Ambassador in London, Mirepoix, to come to a friendly arrangement with Newcastle, the Prime Minister, who, so far as he was concerned, declared himself ready and willing to go into the matter straight away. But a rapid agreement was out of the question. Newcastle displayed maps which were totally unlike ours. There was no agreeing either names or places. Mirepoix had two rivers where Newcastle had but one; a plain where he had a mountain; a French fort where he had an English one. On the strength of a report drawn up by some Indian chiefs, Mirepoix was convinced that Jumonville had been killed in the course of a conversation, but Newcastle carefully concealed from Mirepoix, as he did from Pennsylvania and Maryland, that the Ohio Company held a concession in form from the home government. Thus the negotiations were all carried on in the dark. These delays only served to make the war-party still more bellicose. In private, Newcastle protested that war would be an absurdity, and undertook to punish Washington; but to save his cabinet and perhaps his skin, he caused the King to declare before Parliament that he knew perfectly well how to protect the possessions which composed the source of England's wealth. Passing from words to deeds, he at length decided to attack Canada unawares and without a declaration of war. An army of regular troops and militiamen under the command of Braddock was to march on Fort Duquesne, while a Fleet under Boscawen would blockade Louisbourg and bar

the entrance to the St. Lawrence. 'If you encounter any French men-of-war or other ships with troops or munitions on board,' ran Boscawen's instructions, 'you will make your best endeavours to assume charge of them. In case you should meet with resistance you will use the means at your disposal to capture and destroy them.'

The major part of a French squadron which had sailed from Brest, had fortunately succeeded in reaching Quebec, but three ships which had been delayed – the *Alcide*, the *Lys* and the *Royal Dauphin* – ran into the English Fleet on June 10th, 1755, close to the Newfoundland Banks. The English opened fire. The captain of the *Alcide* himself seized his megaphone and twice shouted the same question, 'Are we at peace or at war?' On the nearest English vessel, the *Dunkirk*, the captain answered quite clearly, 'Peace, peace!' And then, no less distinctly, he was heard to add, 'Fire!' He was immediately obeyed. The *Royal Dauphin* got away, but the *Alcide* and the *Lys* fell into the enemy's hands. For month after month the attacks went on. Braddock tried to storm Fort Duquesne, but he was completely routed. He himself was killed in the course of the fighting and his troops, seized with panic, took to flight, leaving guns, baggage and military chest in the hands of their adversaries. Another English army occupied Acadia (Nova Scotia) where there was a large French Catholic population. Ten thousand inhabitants were dragged from their homes, forcibly put on ship-board and deported. In October and November, Boscawen and Hawke, cruising in the Channel and the Atlantic, seized as many as three hundred French merchantmen. Six thousand seamen were taken prisoner, and of the captured, some, who were being threatened with death, were compelled to sign on among enemy crews. These losses were destined to prove a great handicap throughout the whole of the campaign, and for a time at least, the mobilization of our fleet became almost out of the question. Nevertheless, it became increasingly evident that France would have to go to war. But whereas in London, the torrent of popular feeling (as Frederick put it) swept everything before it, Louis the Fifteenth only made up his mind after prolonged delays. For six months longer he endeavoured to come to terms, restraining his privateersmen, doing his utmost to demonstrate his good faith and his desire to be conciliatory. Never was there a monarch more sincerely devoted to peace, or more anxious to avoid spilling the blood of his subjects. But all his efforts were thrown away, and in the end he was obliged to resign himself to the inevitable.

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Nevertheless, the war did not find him unprepared. As early as 1701, he had acquainted the Maréchal de Noailles with the tenour of a memorandum he had received from Puy sieulx, the Secretary of State, and had requested him to send him a reply setting forth his ideas as to the proper attitude to adopt towards England. 'The English,' wrote Noailles, 'ought to be looked upon as the heart and soul of every kind of anti-French policy in Europe, and it must be confessed that in adopting such an attitude they are doing what one would naturally expect them to do. The English have no direct interest in Continental wars except in so far as they furnish her with an occasion for invading our colonies and securing all the trade. The English aims are well known; they aim at an hegemony based on wealth, rather than on military power, and America is the only road by which they can attain their object.' From this it was clearly to be inferred that, to compensate for our inferiority at sea, an alliance with Spain, the second maritime power in Europe, was an urgent necessity. Philip the Fifth was dead and his son Ferdinand the Sixth, a Spaniard to the finger tips, was not so closely bound to France as his father had been.

In 1754, after the fall of Ensenada, the Francophil minister, Louis the Fifteenth made an attempt to win back his faithless ally. He wrote, with his own hand, a long and very moving letter, in which he endeavoured to awaken in Ferdinand's mind the memory, the glory, the trials and the mutual affection of bygone days. 'The tender affection which unites us, would not be such as it is, and as my heart desires it to remain, if it failed to inspire us with sufficient trust to make known our views and sentiments one to another. . . . The English from time immemorial have been the constant and implacable enemies of our blood and state; never have we had foes more dangerous. Had it not been for the sacrifices made by Louis the Fourteenth, our common ancestor, sacrifices of his own treasure and of his subjects' blood; had it not been for his constancy and firmness . . . the English would have wrested the Crown of Spain and the Indies from his descendants. It is the memory of these important objects of his policy (which were so deeply graven in the mind of the late King Philip the Fifth, your father and my uncle), which prompted the friendship and unwavering affection he always entertained for me and for France, and these aims, it is, which unite me no less closely with Spain. I am perfectly convinced that Your Majesty thinks the same. It is this identity of interests and sentiments that should draw ever closer and

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closer the bonds which unite our persons, our houses, our governments and our peoples.' To this appeal Ferdinand only replied with vague expressions of goodwill and with a very definite piece of advice and that was – to patch things up with the English at any price.

We can readily imagine how anxious Louis the Fifteenth must have been. During the War of Succession, France had at all events had her traditional allies beside her; Europe had been divided into two camps, in accordance with a line of demarcation following the identical course of the line which had divided it in the previous wars. If Villars and Marlborough had been recalled to earth, they would have known precisely where they were and have promptly taken up their old positions again. What had resulted from this repetition of a drama that had been so often re-enacted? Fruitless combats and then a peace which pleased no one. The next war looked as if it would have an outcome still less favourable. France would have but one ally and that was Frederick, and Frederick had deceived her twice before, and would certainly not hesitate to do so again, if he thought it would pay him. Now it happened that, at this juncture, the English were openly negotiating a defensive treaty with the Czarina Elisabeth of Russia, in whose mind the progress of Brandenburg was causing considerable perturbation. The Anglo-Russian pact was designed, in principle for the maintenance of peace and existing frontiers in Germany. It mutually guaranteed the integrity of the possessions of the two contracting parties, especially in regard to Hanover, King George's own peculiar property. In Elisabeth's mind, the whole arrangement was to be a safeguard against Frederick who would be brought to reason by a wholesome awe of the Russian arms. However by a piece of most cunning duplicity the English used the agreement not to crush a foe, but as an instrument of blackmail to secure an ally. They let Frederick into the secret of their *liaison* with the Czarina. At a glance he realized the danger, saw himself hemmed in and without paying the slightest heed to the obligations which still bound him to France, without denouncing the agreement, without a word to Louis the Fifteenth, he crossed over into the opposite camp and, turning his arms against his friends, became England's champion against Versailles (Treaty of Westminster, January 16th, 1756). When the Duc de Nivernais arrived in Berlin to negotiate the renewal of the Franco-Prussian Treaty, Frederick already formed one of the hostile coalition. We were completely isolated.



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The reversal of the alliances, that is to say the *rapprochement* of France and Austria, is directly attributable to this act of treachery on the part of the King of Prussia. For such, in plain unvarnished language, it was. Had it not been for the Treaty of Westminster, the alliance of Louis the Fifteenth and Maria Theresa would never have been concluded, or, if concluded, it would have run on different lines. Doubtless, both sovereigns desired it. Louis had wanted it for fifteen years; Maria Theresa ever since she lost Silesia. Both looked on it as offering advantages to their respective countries. But Louis the Fifteenth had been too loyal to throw over Frederick, and inasmuch as, in his estimation, the only object of the Hapsburg alliance was the maintenance of peace, he inserted, as necessary conditions, the adhesion of Prussia, the formal recognition of Prussia's sovereignty over Silesia, and the complete abandonment of the *revanche* policy fostered by Maria Theresa and her advisers. On both sides, immediately after the war, soundings of the situation had been taken. Kaunitz in Paris, d'Hautefort in Vienna had been profuse in their proposals. But the Empress was still too sore from her recent defeat to acquiesce in such pacific notions. After some months of compliments, courtesies and trifling gifts, they had not got an inch nearer an agreement, and the negotiations had to be abandoned.

Five years later they were resumed by Maria Theresa whom the threat of another war was beginning to alarm. Knowing that, with the exception of Machault, the whole French cabinet was made up of pro-Prussians, she thought of addressing Louis the Fifteenth direct. But the question was, how was she to approach him? Nobody at Versailles but called to mind the discomfiture that had befallen Fleury in 1742, when this same Maria Theresa had published the Cardinal's secret overtures for peace in the Dutch gazettes. Might there not be some minister about him who would advise his master to pay her back in her own coin, with the express object of making bad blood between her and England? The only way to succeed was to discover an intermediary so placed, personally, as to render any indiscretion impossible. She was unable to make up her mind between the Prince de Conti, the head of Louis the Fifteenth's inner cabinet, and Madame de Pompadour. The Ambassador, Stahremberg, plumped for the Pompadour. Whether the Austrian advances were accepted or rejected, one thing was certain, and that was that Louis could not broadcast them for fear of compromising his mistress, and giving substance to the notion that France's political fortunes were decided in the boudoir of the King's favourite. On

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August 30th, 1755, Stahremberg delivered into the hands of Madame de Pompadour a confidential letter from Maria Theresa which she forthwith passed on to the King. Louis the Fifteenth had no hesitation in agreeing to the suggested conversations, and he entrusted the Abbé de Bernis with the task of making the opening move with Stahremberg.

Bernis was born in 1715 at Saint-Marcel d'Ardèche in Vivarais. His family was a very ancient and honourable one. Being the youngest son, he was destined for the Church. He got through his elementary studies with the Jesuits of Louis-le-Grand, his philosophy at Saint Sulpice, and his theology at the Sorbonne. He became successively Canon at Brioude and at Lyons, that is to say he belonged to Chapters to which the highest credentials of birth and breeding could alone have gained him the *entrée*. That was well enough, but it was all purely honorary. He was an Abbé without orders, and benefices did not come his way. Chubby, fresh-complexioned, spruce, with more quarterings than crown-pieces to his name, he plunged boldly into society, and turned out some neat *vers galants* in which there was a deal about love and zephyrs, and garlands, and sheepfolds and shepherdesses. His literary talents helped to enliven supper-parties, and all his life long, the harmless gaieties of his youth were perpetually being brought up against him. His verses, however, were far from worthless. In Sainte-Beuve's judgment, some of the best have about them a suggestion of the languorous harmonies that characterise the poetry of Lamartine. For the rest, he himself was under no illusion. When he became ambitious, he put away childish things. Madame de Pompadour's friendship brought him both dignity and ease; but no official position. At length, after a good deal of wire-pulling he was appointed Ambassador at Venice, a post in the second rank of diplomatic prizes.

'I will tell you frankly,' said Puysieulx to his face, when he had conquered his prejudices against him, 'that I did everything in my power to prevent the King from appointing you as his minister. I could not tell him you were a rascal, because it is well established that you are an honest man. I could not tell him you were a fool, because everyone knows that you are possessed of brains. But I made him apprehensive that those brains were enlisted on the side of the imagination rather than on the side of sober sense. It was suggested that you should be sent to Poland, but I impressed upon them how dangerous it would be to entrust you with so delicate a

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mission. At last, though not without reluctance, I agreed to your being appointed to Venice, for the reason that if you did foolish things there, it would not greatly matter.'

But the change of work brought with it a change of character. Intellectually he was suited to grapple with weighty matters. At Venice he had a clever way of getting on friendly terms with the foreign envoys, so that, of all the King's ambassadors, he soon became the best informed. At Madrid, the Duc de Duras had not been a success. He had put all his money on Ensenada, and Ensenada had been sent packing. He was at loggerheads with the Queen, still more so with the ministers. It was thought that the Abbé might patch up the alliance again. He was appointed, accepted and almost *en route*, when, one day, Madame de Pompadour suddenly told him about the Empress's proposals and his new mission. At this juncture the King came in.

'What do you think of von Stahremberg's letter?' he asked, without any beating about the bush.

Bernis drew rather a lively picture of the danger there would be in tying ourselves up to a princess who thought of nothing but of fighting and of battles, and he declared himself apprehensive lest, if she were simply playing with us, the negotiations should supply Prussia with a pretext for throwing us over. The King listened with impatience to what he had to say, and when he had finished, said to him almost angrily:

'You are like the rest, another enemy of the Queen of Hungary!'

Bernis protested that he was quite impartial, called to mind the former plans for a union, but declared that he could not, in conscience, withdraw the objections which he had just laid before the King.

'Well then,' answered the latter, with some show of emotion, 'all that remains to be done is to pay a handsome compliment to Herr von Stahremberg and to tell him that we don't want to hear a word about it.'

'That is not what I feel, Sire,' answered Bernis. 'It is entirely in Your Majesty's interests to learn the intentions of the Court of Vienna, but we ought to be careful about the answer we make.'

The King then retired immediately to hold a council. When he came back he told Bernis that he had contrived to put the matter to two of his ministers in a rather cunning and roundabout way. 'You ought to be pleased,' he added. 'They both think as you do.' It was arranged that, in order not to attract attention, Bernis and

Stahremberg should meet, to begin with, at an informal luncheon at Madame de Pompadour's country house at Bellevue and afterwards alone, in Bernis's own quarters at the Tuileries. The pourparlers went on for six months. Not a whisper of them got abroad. When, in December, 1755, they were far enough advanced, the ministers were let into the secret and proceeded to deliberate on the matter at their leisure, sometimes in the Council with the King, sometimes in 'committee' without him.

Maria Theresa had not attempted any excessive *finesse*. On the very first day, Stahremberg read over to Bernis an outline of the plan she thought would meet the case, so far as she was concerned. France should openly and emphatically abandon the Prussian alliance and, if she did not afford her military support, should leave Austria free to recover Silesia by force of arms. On her side, Maria Theresa would use her good offices in securing the election of a French Prince, to wit Conti, to the Polish throne. The Infante Don Philip, the King's son-in-law, was to exchange his little Italian duchies for a more satisfactory establishment in Belgium which might, like Lorraine, one day revert to France. This was her guarantee of good faith. At the first sign of an attack by England, the Empress would permit Louis the Fifteenth to occupy Nieuport and Ostend. What it amounted to was this, that against the hope of getting back Silesia, Maria Theresa was prepared to relinquish a portion of the Netherlands, where French influence was already paramount, which was difficult to defend, and was encumbered by so many international treaty-rights that her sovereignty there was already extremely limited. This was all very well, but Louis the Fifteenth was extremely unwilling to be dragged into a continental war, and, though Stahremberg had warned him about the Anglo-Prussian conversations, he would not believe a word of it.

'Loyal to the obligations and laws of honour,' wrote Bernis, 'the King is unable, without the gravest motives and the most patent proofs, not only to break with his allies, but to cast a doubt on their good faith and hold them capable of disloyalty and treason.'

So far as Bernis was concerned, the whole problem consisted in transforming the bellicose agreements put forward by the Empress, into an exchange of pacific guarantees in which Frederick might participate and which, far from sowing the seeds of future war, would set the seal on Prussia's conquests and so remove all occasion for armed conflict in Europe. The Abbé was quite clever enough to have brought this delicate operation to a successful issue. In his

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Memoirs he congratulates himself for having almost won over Stahremberg to his views, when the Prussian treachery ruined the whole thing. The situation was absolutely changed, and wholly to our disadvantage. Why should the Empress pay so dearly for the rupture of an alliance that no longer existed? Why in the world should she offer us lands and fortresses in order to persuade us to abandon a ruler who had abandoned us? Without a friend in the world, we needed her far more than she needed us. If the Paris debates were barren of result, and if the proposed treaty fell through, Austria would inevitably be dragged back by England into the old Francophobe coalition, and the country exposed to the greatest danger that had threatened it since the latter days of Louis the Fourteenth. 'It has been said,' Voltaire remarks, in his *Précis du Siècle de Louis XV*, 'that it was a monstrous thing, this union between France and Austria.' – 'Being necessary, it was very natural.' Look at it how we may, our negotiators were no longer in a position to pick and choose. The utmost they could do was to limit the extent of the assistance which, if occasion arose, we bound ourselves to give Maria Theresa as an offset for the promised security of our Northern frontier. At last, on May 1st, 1756, the terms of the alliance were agreed upon. It was strictly defensive. Austria promised to hold herself aloof from 'the differences that have arisen between His Most Christian Majesty and His Britannic Majesty,' 'differences' which were no concern of hers. With regard to Germany she undertook to observe the provisions laid down by the treaties of Westphalia which 'are hereby renewed in this present treaty as though they were set down therein explicitly and word for word.' France and Austria then mutually undertake to protect each other against any aggression on the part of Prussia. If one or other of them were attacked, the other was to come to its assistance with a force of 24,000 men.

This reversal of alliances is an event of considerable importance in our history. It bewildered public opinion, and caused a good deal of perplexity even to those whose duties in military or diplomatic circles destined them to the service of the new regime. Bernis, who was appointed to the Foreign Office in order that he might continue to take charge of the work he had begun, complained that the alliance was being 'silently opposed' by everyone. The fact is that it would have taken someone a great deal more impressive than he was, to restrain the disaffected and to induce the hesitators to work with zeal for the common good. The Austrophobes, the blind

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upholders of tradition, were loud in their protests. The tale that was going the rounds was that the King had thrown over the ancient watchword, all because of some court intrigue, and just to please the favourite. Frederick did his best to bolster up that version of the matter. He gave out that Madame de Pompadour had made hay with the interests of France merely because it tickled her vanity to be addressed as '*chère amie*' by the Empress. His obsequious pen-men affirmed that the whole business had been settled within an hour between Stahremberg, Bernis and herself, and that, as for Bernis, he could not forgive Frederick for poking fun at his poetry. That was all that had been needed to make the descendant of Henry the Fourth forget all the lessons of his illustrious forefathers:

Versons pour la reine d'Hongrie  
 Tout notre sang:  
 Donnons-lui pour la Silésie  
 Tout notre argent,  
 Elle a su plaie à Pompadour.

As a matter of fact Louis's only mistake was that he allowed the King of Prussia to steal a march on him. That means that he was blamed for acting like a man of honour and for putting his country's good name before State expediency.

England declared war on us on May 18th, 1756. In August Frederick joined in the struggle and, without the least warning, occupied Saxony, made prisoners the Saxon troops and forcibly incorporated them with his own. In an instant Europe was up in arms. Maria Theresa at least brought us the alliance of Russia, Sweden and the Princes of the Empire. On May 1st, 1757, a second treaty drew yet closer the bonds between France and Austria. The two powers proposed so to humble Prussia that never again in future should she be able to disturb the peace and tranquillity of the world. France therefore increased her contingent to one hundred thousand men. As soon as Austria had reconquered Silesia, we were to get Mons, Ypres, Furnes, Ostend and Nieuport; the Infante Don Philip would be transferred to Belgium, with full sovereign powers.

The war began exceedingly well. A fleet of twelve ships, under Admiral La Galissonnière, made a sudden descent on Minorca, the base from which the English were threatening the Western Mediterranean. Maréchal de Richelieu was at the head of the landing party. Port Mahon fell without a blow, Admiral Byng was driven off, and Fort St. Philip take by assault. On his side, Frederick

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marched triumphantly into Bohemia, but he met with a reverse before Prague and was defeated at Kollin by Marshal Daun (June, 1757). At the same time, the Anglo-German forces under Cumberland were driven from Westphalia by Maréchal d'Estrées. His successor, Richelieu, made himself master of the whole of Hanover, and pursuing Cumberland as far as the Estuary of the Elbe, there compelled him to surrender (September). But instead of taking him prisoner and disarming his troops, Richelieu granted him special terms, whereby the conquered general merely pledged himself to abstain from further fighting against France, and to send his soldiers home. This most reprehensible error of judgment decided the fate of the campaign, and, it may be, of the whole war. King George repudiated the undertaking, the Hanoverians suddenly resumed hostilities, and Richelieu, taken unawares, was compelled to evacuate the country, which he had most shamefully plundered.

At the end of the year, the fortune of war completely changed. A Franco-German army under the joint command of Prince von Hiedburghausen and Soubise had assembled to the west of the Saal and was threatening Leipsic. It numbered some 55,000 men, 24,000 of whom were French troops of moderate quality, but lacking in discipline, and 31,000 Germans, a heterogeneous collection made up of contingents furnished by thirty or forty princes of the Empire. The allies were strongly entrenched on some rising ground overlooking Rossbach, and Frederick, with only half the number of troops at his command, could not hope to dislodge them by a frontal attack. He made a feint of withdrawing, and this apparent retreat inspired von Hiedburghausen with the ill-fated idea of enveloping his adversary's left wing and cutting his communications. No sooner was this movement well under way, than Frederick turned his men about and, just when the allies were congratulating themselves that they were going to take him in full retreat, they themselves were assailed in front and flank. The enveloping troops gave way at the first volley, drawing some of the French troops along with them. The others re-formed amid the fleeing mob, and held on until nightfall. Not until every single officer had been killed, did they begin to fall back. Soubise was not in supreme command, nevertheless his conduct would have disgraced a schoolboy. True, he was victorious next year over a combined force of Hessians and Hanoverians, but it availed him nothing. He was stereotyped in the popular imagination as the man who had been beaten at Rossbach, and Paris held him up to ridicule.

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Soubise dit, la lanterne à la main:  
J'ai beau chercher! où diable est mon armée?  
Elle était là pourtant hier matin.  
Me l'a-t-on prise, ou l'aurais-je égarée?  
Prodige heureux! La voilà, la voilà!

O ciel! que mon âme est ravie!  
Mais non, qu'est-ce donc que cela?  
Ma foi, c'est l'armée ennemie.

One month to the very day, after Rossbach, the Austrians who, for a brief space, had occupied Berlin, were in turn beaten and dispersed at Leuthen, in Silesia (December 5th, 1757), leaving upwards of thirty thousand prisoners in Frederick's hands.

After this, the course of events revolved again in almost identical sequence. Every spring, Frederick was attacked on three sides by three groups of hostile forces converging on Berlin. His plan was to manœuvre among them in such a way as to engage and crush each one in detail, before they could get a chance of effecting a junction. Once they succeeded in uniting, they would have had an overwhelming numerical superiority. Separately he was a match for any one of them. But, in order to hold his own, Frederick was condemned to be victor in perpetuity. The slightest reverse would lay bare his capital and impose upon him a calamitous retreat. None of his victories was decisive. He had to keep on beginning the whole business over again. As his forces were being used up more quickly than those of his powerful rivals, he would have had to abandon the struggle at the second or third campaign. But all through, he enjoyed the advantage which unity of command never fails to bestow. The allies made war after the fashion of a coalition, and with all the handicaps a coalition involves. Their movements were only determined after interminable official discussions. Thus their operations were imperfectly co-ordinated and lacking in precision. Apraxine, the Russian General, was bribed by the English to remain inactive. According to Choiseul-Praslin, our Ambassador, 'the Austrian fighting-man was full of ambition, jealousy and party-spirit' and according to Bernis, the Frenchman was all feud and faction. Soubise, Richelieu, d'Estrées, Broglie, Saint-Germain, Contades and Clermont were all jealous of one another and always squabbling among themselves. No single one of them was sufficiently outstanding to enable him to dictate to the others. Having no definite



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achievements to judge by, the Council could only rely on *a priori* presumptions. Madame de Pompadour backed up her friends. They were not worth a great deal, but they were worth as much as the rest of them. It was hoped to put an end to the dissensions by appointing Maréchal Belle-Isle to the War Office, but he was just as great a schemer as any of them. France had plenty of soldiers, plenty of subalterns, plenty of munitions, but no leaders. Since the death of Maurice de Saxe and Lowendahl, military science had sunk to a very low level indeed. To begin with, the Marshals fondly imagined that they could make up by bluster and bravado for what they lacked in tactics and strategy. Then, perceiving that that presumption was at fault, they made it their chief object not to give the enemy a chance of scoring a decisive victory, and so the campaign dragged on without any definite result. There was at least one thing to the good, the French frontiers were never in peril.

We carried on the fight between the Elbe and the Rhine, first in Saxony, later on in Hesse and Westphalia. This remoteness contributed to give the public the idea that the war was no affair of theirs. The masses were keenly sensible of the humiliation of our reverses but not to the extent of deeming that any further sacrifices were called for to avenge them. As for the philosophers, they openly applauded Frederick's victories, for in their eyes Frederick was the champion of free-thought as opposed to religious obscurantism. The ambitions of the King of Prussia could only be satisfied by flinging Europe into the melting-pot. This explains the concurrence of Prussian policy with the philosophic movement, whence, in due time, sprung the Revolution. As soon as Frederick realized the advantages that were likely to accrue to him from the sympathetic attitude of the 'advanced' authors, he did everything he could, by cajolery, flattery, compliments, and arguments by no means solely intellectual, to win and retain their support. As M. Jacques Bainville has well said 'The fact that the advanced school of writers of the Eighteenth Century did not see, indeed refused to see, the Prussian peril, is a sufficient condemnation of their political philosophy.' Their error proves their inability to understand the trend of things or to further the progress which they so loudly demanded. By turning against Prussia and drawing closer to Austria, the French Monarchy had, as it were, symbolised its intention of shaking itself free from a prejudice three centuries old. The philosophers had possessed neither the vigour nor the intellectual independence necessary to cast off the burden of that prejudice. They showed how

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servile were their ideas and how wedded they were to routine. They did not rise above the level of the ignorant and uncritical mob.

Nevertheless, in 1759, Prussia came within an ace of irremediable disaster. The Austrians and the Russians had at length succeeded in co-ordinating their operations. With their combined forces, they completely defeated Frederick at Kunersdorf, to the east of Frankfort-on-the-Oder (August 13th). A little more daring, and it would have been all over with the Hohenzollerns. At Vienna, Choiseul-Praslin was busily laying down that the object of a battle is not to occupy territory, but to destroy the enemy's forces. 'The power of the King of Prussia,' he wrote, 'resides in his army, in his person, in his genius, far more than in his fortresses and his possessions.' The great thing therefore is 'to pursue him without respite, to give him no time to repair his shattered forces.'

But Choiseul-Praslin's counsel passed unheeded. What Austria was fighting for was Silesia. So off the Austrians went, laying siege to towns. As for the Russians, they were not taking any chances by themselves. Besides it would not do to be over-victorious. The Czarina Elisabeth would, in due course, be succeeded by her nephew, the Grand Duke Peter, who was an out-and-out Prussian. 'The Russian Court knows it,' wrote our Ambassador, l'Hôpital, 'and everything bows before the rising sun. . . That accounts for the unsatisfactory manœuvres of the Russian Generals.' In 1760, Soltykoff pushed forward another stage nearer Berlin, which he ransomed, but, in 1762, Elisabeth died, and Peter the Third hastened to make peace with Frederick.

At this time, France had already suffered some heavy disasters in her colonies. Still our Navy had not been neglected. The successors of Maurepas, Rouille and Machault pushed on with the shipbuilding programme as far as the country's finances would allow, but, by sea as well as by land, we were badly off for leaders. The only real sailor we had, La Galissonnière, died in 1756, and among his successors all was jealousy and mutual recrimination. Boscawen's piratical activities had robbed us of our experienced commanders. The chief object of the high command was not to risk defeat. With the new-born English Fleet, animated as it was by the imperious spirit of the great Pitt, it was thought that the best thing was to be cautious, and, on occasion, to cut and run. However, it was thought that all would be well when Massiac came to the Admiralty. He only made confusion worse confounded by embroiling himself with the civilian

heads. His successor, Berryer, backed the civilians against the service men. But the storm, though it blew from another quarter, still continued. However, the colonies were far from being neglected to the extent that some people have tried to make out. In 1756, Montcalm landed in Canada with reinforcements amounting to 2,000 men and in the forty-four following months he received funds amounting to 109 millions. Similarly, in 1759, d'Ache arrived at Pondicherry with a squadron and 4,000 men who, added to the 1,600 brought over by Godeheu, gave the new Governor, Lally-Tollendal, three times as many soldiers as Duplex had had, and twice as many as the English could put on the field. As Godeheu had departed without waiting for the measures he had prescribed to be carried out, Bussy was well able to keep the flag flying in the Deccan, and we should have been victorious in that theatre had it not been for the clumsy pig-headedness of the aforesaid Lally.

A brave soldier, but self-sufficient and of limited ability, he understood nothing about native politics and refused to listen to a word of advice. He recalled Bussy, alienated the natives, fell out with the officers, incensed the priests by looting the Temples, and failed to get himself obeyed by d'Ache who, after practically beating the British admiral Pocock, decided that he would depart, and never came back again. He went through the war quite peacefully in the Ile Bourbon, but he prevented Lally from capturing Madras, and this initial check turned all our old allies against us. Sick of being insulted and maltreated, they went over to the English. Finally, Lally shut himself up in Pondicherry. There he held out a year, and surrendered on February 17th, 1761.

In Canada the difference in population was such that Montcalm could not have maintained his position had he not been reinforced every spring. The trouble was that the English were blockading our coasts. One of their attempts at landing—it was near Saint Malo—had met with disaster; but still our fleets were none the less imprisoned in our own harbours. One squadron did, indeed, succeed in getting through, but it returned to Brest *re infecta*, its sole achievement being to come back with an outbreak of typhus which, spreading to the town and the ships in harbour, killed off fifteen thousand people. There were the same sort of misunderstandings in Canada as elsewhere. Vaudreuil the Governor, Bigot the Intendant, Montcalm who commanded the troops, did not get on at all. Moreover Bigot was probably a knave, who was 'making his bit' on the stores. However, the colony had been put in such excellent

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defence, and the inhabitants were so superior to their adversaries in courage and patriotic feeling that, for two more years, Montcalm continued to be victorious along the whole line. Pitt sent out thirty-six ships and twenty-three battalions. Sixty thousand men started to march on Quebec in three columns, by the St. Lawrence, Lake Champlain, and the Ohio. Over the second of them, Montcalm scored yet another victory, defeating it at Fort Carillon but Louisbourg and Forts Frontenac and Duquesne fell into the enemy's hands (1758). The following year Quebec was taken after a desperate battle, in the course of which Montcalm was mortally wounded. He died the death of a hero. In 1760, it was Montreal's turn to fall into the hands of the English.

France, however, made yet another effort. Bernis, ill and sick at heart, had wearied everybody with his jeremiads. His letters betray a man whose nerves had got the better of him. 'We have no generals, and no statesmen,' he wrote, among other things. 'I consider that remark so good and so true that I am myself quite willing to be involved in the unflattering category.' He was raised to the Cardinalate, but he still wanted to be Prime Minister. He offered his resignation in the hopes that Louis would beg him to stay. The King was unkind and took him at his word. He was succeeded by Choiseul, Ambassador at Vienna. A recruit to the new system, Choiseul determined to go on with the war, but he saw that no tangible advantage would be gained as long as we remained helpless at sea. Spain, though fallen from her high estate, was still a force to be reckoned with. Naples was in a good position in the Mediterranean, and Bourbons reigned at Madrid and Naples, as well as in Paris. Choiseul succeeded in winning them to our cause and the Family Pact (August 15th, 1761) was added to the Austrian Alliance, whose terms were carefully restricted (Third Treaty of Versailles, March, 1709).

The idea was sound, but it came too late. Moreover Choiseul made the mistake of opening his mouth too wide. He organised a descent on England, but the English defeated the Toulon squadron at Lagos when it was attempting to link up with Brest, and the Brest squadron was itself scattered and destroyed off Quiberon (August, 1759). The Marquis de Conflares, the Admiral, was far from being the vainglorious, incompetent nincompoop that report would have us believe, but he was not precisely pregnant with celestial fire. He was somewhat of a defeatist who looked on a fight as a highly undesirable thing, which common prudence should recommend

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one to avoid. A diversion carried out by our privateersmen against Ireland proved barren of result. In the course of the next few years England possessed herself of the Spanish colonies.

All the belligerents were now heartily sick of the war. The English had their hands full, and their sole aim was to consolidate their conquests. The intractable Pitt had been overthrown in October, 1761. His successor, Lord Bute, and the new King, George the Third, did not share his 'noble rage'. Since the miscarriage of the 1760 campaign, Maria Theresa had been 'disgusted'. She kept on remarking in her conversation that she hadn't a chance, that 'her luck was out, and that to beat the King of Prussia and win back Silesia was a proved and patent impossibility', that 'the war had missed its mark' and that Frederick was 'unbeatable'. As for us, it was all one proof the more that no conflict with England could have a favourable issue so long as our navy was inferior to hers. In the Treaty of Paris (February 10th, 1763), this lesson was brought home to us, and the lesson cost us nearly the whole of our Colonial Empire: Canada, all Senegal except Gorce, all India save the five trading stations that we still hold, Louisiana ceded to the Spaniards by way of compensation for Florida which they were abandoning anyhow – unquestionably the burden of our defeat was heavy upon us.

And yet public opinion took the matter pretty coolly. The general run of the people of course felt their pride wounded at having got the worst of it. They blamed the Government, the Court, the Generals and the favourite, but somehow they did not seem to care very much what happened to Canada. We still retained everything which, according to contemporary ways of thinking, had any sort of value: the sugar islands in the West Indies, on whose trade the wealth of our seaports depended. In India we had plenty of towns for trading purposes; in America we held the fishing rights, the only thing that was then deemed worth a thought. Choiseul could boast with a straight face that he had sold the English a pretty packet. No one laughed.

What was at the root of our defeats? Without doubt the weakening of authority, the leaders' lack of discipline, and the dissensions in the Government. Everyone argued: no one obeyed. The ideals of obedience and devotion to duty, which had once constituted the greatness and prosperity of the monarchy, were totally lacking to-day, and there was nothing to take their place. 'Of all our officers,' wrote the Comte de Broglie, 'it may be truthfully said that

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each one individually has as much courage and more ability than the officers of our adversaries, but they go wrong on one essential point: there are hardly any of them, even among the youngest subalterns, who don't go drawing up plans of campaign for the Army and finding fault with the Commander in Chief. There is nothing more common than to hear high falutin' notions being aired about the science and art of soldiering, nothing more rare than to find an officer really capable of handling his platoon.'

Pitt's implacable energy would hardly have overcome the peril, for whereas the whole British nation supported its leader with one heart and mind, Louis the Fifteenth had to face a veritable domestic revolt, a judicial and middle-class insurrection which sapped the governing power, wore down the ministers, and delayed, or defeated, all measures for pulling the country through. Do not let us lose sight of this. The year of Rossbach was also the year of Damiens, and whilst Quebec was slipping from our grasp, the magistrates of the kingdom were going on strike to avoid paying their taxes.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE WAR OF THE TAXES

ON December 6th, 1745, a messenger set out from Valenciennes. He was bearing a letter from M. de Machault, intendant of the province, to the Comte de Maurepas, Secretary to the King's Household.

'Monsieur (thus the letter ran), the post of Controller-General of Finance for which the King is so kind as to let his gaze fall upon me, is above all my hopes and (if I may be permitted to say so), all my desires. Moved by the liveliest and most respectful gratitude for the King's infinite kindnesses, I feel to the very depths of my heart what I owe to His Majesty for the confidence with which he has thus deigned to honour me, but I do *not* feel, Monsieur, that I possess either the capacity or the talents necessary to enable me to fulfil, in a manner profitable to the King and the Government, a position of such high importance. Bear with me then, Monsieur, when I beg you, with all the urgency at my command, to point out to His Majesty that, by accepting it, I should ill requite his generosity, and that I can give him no better proof of my zealous desire to serve him than by imploring him to make choice of someone who may better be able to render him more useful service in the distinguished position which he is fain to confer upon me. I am, Monsieur, with great respect, your very humble and obedient servant.'

Three days later, the messenger was back again. The note he handed to Machault was very brief; but it brooked neither refusal nor hesitation, for it was a mandate from the King.

'When I chose you,' it said, 'for Controller-General of my Finances, it was that I deemed you the best fitted to fill that post. Your representations do but increase the esteem I entertained for you, and prove to me that you are one of the most honourable men in my Kingdom, and the most capable of serving me in the position in question. Thus everything confirms me in my choice, and I expect from you this mark of devotion to my service and to the service of my government.'

Jean Baptiste de Machault came of an ancient family that had been magistrates for several generations. It was a Machault who had put down the Montmorency revolt in Richelieu's days. Another

member of the family had been intendant at Montauban, Chalons, and Amiens, and a member of the Commission formed by Colbert for the reform of the 'ordonnances'. The father of the newly appointed minister occupied a seat on the Council of State, having been Lieutenant-General of Police. He was upright, capable, exacting and severe, and had been nicknamed Cut-your-head-off-Machault. From him Jean Baptiste inherited his stern face, his chilly address, his grave, impressive manner. 'Firm', 'taciturn', 'austere', 'icy', 'iron-headed', 'mowing his way before him', these are the sort of expressions that occur again and again in the memoirs of the time. Bernis goes farther and calls him over-bearing, a dry-as-dust, a pedant, but then Bernis detested him, and his view is distorted. As a matter of fact, thanks to the multifarious duties which fell to his lot in Hainaut, Michault had had the good fortune to correct the lawyer-like formality of his original make-up. Even to-day we know him better from his deeds than from his writings. He never went to the trouble of composing his own panegyric. He was neither a theoriser nor a dreamer, but a clear-headed, practical man. As a financial authority he was a long way behind the Pârises and in resourcefulness, in the art of improvising ways and means where none existed, he was no less behind Necker; as a politician he was far less prolific in ideas than either d'Argenson or Turgot, but he outrivalled them all in clearness of vision and in strength of will. Louis the Fifteenth hoped that he would find in him his Colbert. Of all his ministers it was Machault and Maupeou whom he held in chief regard; Machault because he had the strongest sense of duty, because he was the most indifferent to prejudices, and the boldest in putting through reforms. Is this to be wondered at? Louis the Fifteenth never admitted the Maréchal de Richelieu to his Council. He found him amusing, but he despised him. He was particularly ruthless in his dismissal of Maurepas because he could not endure his die-away airs, his songs, and his dainty, mincing ways. Choiseul he liked for his intelligence and his patriotism, but his social magnificence, and his drawing-room triumphs, of which the Duke was so vain, he found it hard to put up with. Certainly the King used to have plenty of amiable fools in the shape of *grands seigneurs* to his hunt-suppers; but when he was playing the King, he only felt really at home, really on safe ground, with men of the old school, rough-hewn and hard-bitten, grim fellows for work. 'A man after my own heart'; thus it was that Louis the Well-Beloved spoke of the son of Machault-cut-your-head-off.



Orry left office under pressure from the Army Contractors, whom the circumstances of the day rendered all-powerful. It was thought that his successor would be more inclined to come to heel. As a matter of fact, until the war was over, Machault did have to make shift with existing sources of revenue; to do his best to get along with loans, tolls, annuities, the sale of titles, and higher taxes. But all these shifts and expedients only confirmed him in the conviction that a fiscal reform was a crying need, and that the reform would have to be drastic. He felt that it would be no use just correcting a defect here, or another there, setting to rights some executive or administrative detail. He felt that he would have to go to the root of the matter and do the one thing needful, that is to say assess all citizens to taxation on one equalitarian basis, be the consequences what they might.

The financial machinery of the Monarchy was at once slap-dash and out of date. There was practically only one instance of a direct tax and that was the *taille* which, in principle, represented the commutation of military service. That is to say it was not paid by the nobles, since they fought in person, nor by the clergy, who did not fight at all. It was essentially a plebeian tax. Every year the Council fixed the amount of the *taille*, a round fifty millions, and allocated it among the various districts basing their assessment on the figures of the previous year, corrected in the light of coming harvest anticipations, information supplied by local officials, and applications for relief lodged by the taxpayers. All that having been taken into account, each intendant split up the amount he had to collect, among the several parishes in his district. However rough and ready this system may have been, it did not work out at all badly. To begin with, the Conseillers d'Etat and the intendants had had a long experience of the work, and, in the second place, their assessments were not vitiated by any sort of favouritism or unfair partiality. All was fair and square and above board; so that, to put it briefly, with all its imperfections, the preliminary work turned out by them had nothing deliberately unfair about it and was free from any major error. Where the abuses came in was later on, in the final stages. Like our income tax, the *taille* bore *en bloc* on the whole body of taxpayers. In some provinces in the South, where estates were regarded as noble or plebeian in themselves, the assessors had some ancient surveys to go upon, but as they had not been kept up-to-date, these venerable parchments were, in nine cases out of ten, of no use whatever. In other parts of the Kingdom,

even this primitive instrument was lacking. To make up the roll therefore, they had nothing else to rely upon but those vague indications which we call the outward signs of wealth, indications on which the authorities of our own day still rely when, in cases of suspected fraud, they apply for more detailed information than that given on the ordinary return. The central authorities, for their part, thought they had done a very good thing in leaving the individual assessments to the taxpayers themselves. What could be better than to leave the equitable distribution of the burden to the interested parties themselves? Who, in the absence of any accurate documents, would be better able to gauge the resources of any given taxpayer, than the other taxpayers, his fellow-citizens and immediate neighbours.

Unfortunately experience was extremely unkind to this consoling theory. The collectors were very tender where their friends and relations were concerned, and let down their employers, or their probable successors in the collectors' office with remarkable gentleness. The big landowners and the judge gave relief to their own tenants, the *curé* put in a good word for his pet parishioners. Influence, cajolery, threats, intimidation, bribery and corruption — every imaginable device was put in hand to trig the scales, and the upshot of the whole thing was that the major burden fell on the poor and helpless, on the widow and orphan. 'All the subtlety, all the cunning of which human ingenuity is capable', wrote Orry in a circular, 'is employed to secure an inequitable distribution of the burden.' Against this ever-present menace, there was but one defence, and that was poverty, or the semblance of poverty. The peasant was afraid to spend. He came at length to scamp his farming, to let his dwelling-house fall into disrepair, to avoid profitable deals, all because a profit would mean more taxes for him to pay. But the greater the fear of the tax, the more obstinate the attempts to evade it, and, in consequence, the more uncertain the yield it brought to the Exchequer. And so, to provide against contingencies, the Government was gradually led to enter into private agreements with certain tax-farming associations, whereby they would be able to count on a fixed sum which, though no doubt less than the amount payable, would certainly be more promptly forthcoming than the sums actually recovered. In times of peculiar stress, the Government went so far as to offer for sale hundreds of warrants and patents, the only real use of which was to free their holders from their liability to pay the accursed tax; in other words,

for a sum down, the purchaser was tax-free for the rest of his life. When the situation improved the King, it is true, endeavoured to set things to rights, and to recover what had been improperly conceded. He restricted the privileges of the nobility, limited the amount of land which the nobles were permitted to cultivate tax-free, invested the intendants with the right of imposing a summary tax on the kind of powerful, influential people who might browbeat the collectors. But then, against this, an edict was somehow dragged from the Duc de Bourbon, in virtue of which taxpayers were empowered to register in the locality where they resided and not in that in which their farms were situated. This provision favoured all manner of fraud. In a word, legally or illegally, the amount of property assessable to tax grew continually less and less, and the load became only the heavier and the more humiliating for those who were left to shoulder it. Thus it came about that the people who were called upon to bear this iniquitous burden availed themselves in self-defence, of every kind of passive resistance. There were delays, peremptory demands, appeals against assessment, summonses, distrainments – every year the process of collection gave rise to a legal tragi-comedy which handsomely buttered the parsnips of a host of bailiffs, attorneys, and legal small-fry, but enormously increased the costs and delays of collection. Moreover the legal bases of the *taille* were themselves undermined. A large proportion of the nobility were no longer occupied with military service. The majority just passed into the Army and out again and retired to their estates as soon as they decently could. Over and over again it became necessary to draw lots for compulsory enrolment in what was called a militia of commoners who had not volunteered for military service. Finally and most important of all, the various offices and departments of government had been growing in number and complexity since the days of Charles the Seventh. The Governmental machine had acquired a quantity of additional gear which it was only fair that people of every condition should pay for.

Though somewhat thrust aside in the times of prosperity, these considerations came very much to the forefront in the days of distress. The void in the national coffers excited an appetite for fiscal justice. Towards the end of his reign Louis the Fourteenth attempted to impose a general tax, graduated according to rank and fortune. On the first occasion it was a regular affair of class differentiation, a tax on persons, or poll-tax for the purposes of which the whole nation was split up into twenty-three groups.

The first of the twenty-three comprised the Dauphin, the Princes of the Blood, ministers of State and farmers-general; the last was made up of day-labourers. Members of the first category paid two thousand livres, members of the last paid nothing at all. It was a clumsy method, and, moreover, quite feudal, in character. But as soon as it is awakened, the fiscal imagination goes far and fast. The second attempt consisted of a ten per cent tax on the various kinds of revenue, which were set out and assessed, one by one, after declaration and verification. Our tax-schedules to-day are lineally descended from this tithe, or tenth. Both schemes however, suffered from a common fault. In both cases alike the State had been goaded into action by necessity, by a pressing need of cash, far rather than by any abstract desire for equity and justice. And so, in order to ensure a quick and substantial return, it had agreed once more to a host of redemptions, commutations and discounts which had utterly stultified the purposes of the measure. Instituted in 1695, the commoners' poll-tax had come, by 1701, to be nothing more than a mere excrescence on the *taille*, reproducing in an aggravated form, all the vices of the latter. With regard to the tax on the privileged classes, that was assessed at random and collected haphazard. The tenth or tithe had been established in 1710, but only for the duration of the war. It disappeared in 1717, came up again in 1733, was again suppressed in 1737, revived once more in 1741, to be finally abolished in 1749. In spite of Orry's efforts, the system of assessment was always exceedingly defective. To have set it right would have needed a very powerful government department, but that again would have robbed it of its essentially provisional and temporary character as a tax to meet a crisis.

Having decided to put the public finances on a healthy basis by means of a uniform levy on all private incomes, whether privileged or not, Machault made no endeavour to attenuate the boldness of his policy by pleading a national emergency. It was in the piping times of peace that he resolved to put it into effect. As the difficulty was not so much to get the money, as to impose on the upper classes the revolutionary doctrine of fiscal equality for all, he contented himself, at first, with a modest five per cent. What he lost on the swings, he would make up on the roundabouts. Less, by a half, than the old ten per cent impost, the new levy was in fact, established as something final and irrevocable, without exemption, restriction or any sort of alleviation, as a normal and perpetual tax, or better still as a tax-model. The Controller-General's plan was discussed at several

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meetings of the Council and Louis the Fifteenth gave it his full approval in all its details.

The decrees were issued from Marly at the beginning of May, 1749. The first provided for the issue of 1,800,000 livres of government stock at five per cent, redeemable over a period of twelve years by half-yearly drawings. The thirty-six millions thus accruing were to be allocated to the extinction of the debts contracted during the war. For the first time in French history, the new government stock was issued in bearer-bonds with interest coupons attached. Until then, all the stock had been registered, and its transfer had been hampered by numerous formalities and delays. This new departure made the success of the loan a certainty and it was, in fact, covered with the utmost ease.

The second edict had a different importance. In a preamble drawn up with great force and clearness, the King explained to his subjects that the re-establishment of peace made it his bounden duty to labour to perfect the country's financial position by the extinction of the debt. Being, however, unable, from the ordinary income of the *exchequer*, to find the wherewithal to fulfil this all-important object, he found himself, with great regret, obliged to have recourse to the imposition of the *vingtième* (twentieth) which he had adopted in preference to any other expedient, inasmuch as it would be borne by all classes of the community in proportion to their wealth and standing.

The *vingtième* was applicable to four classes of income: income derived from real estate (land, houses) from movable property (investments, except government Stock, mortgages, interest on private loans, clerical, municipal and provincial loans); from manufactures and trade, from emoluments, government stipends, etc. including stipends paid by the Treasury, municipalities and provinces. The *vingtième* presents one remarkable difference compared with our schedule taxation; it was levied on property, but it did not touch labour. There was no levy on salaries, nor even on the profits of farmers and small-holders. 'If public functionaries were not exempt, it was because they were in reality the owners, or proprietors of their job, in the same way as notaries and solicitors own their practices to-day. The *vingtième* had, in comparison with the schedule-tax of the present day, an immense advantage which it owed to the fact that in the eighteenth century, land was the commonest, the safest, the most remunerative, and the most reputable form of property. As landed property cannot be concealed,

and offers itself of its own accord, so to speak, for taxation, the *vingtième* was bound to give rise to far fewer cases of fraud, dissimulation and misdemeanour than our present system to-day. A special Government department consisting of controllers, managers and clerks was inaugurated to assess individual incomes, basing their figures either on returns made by the taxpayers, or on particulars obtained by direct inquiry. The controller visited every parish in order to draw up a working list, and to gather information touching the productivity of the land, the price of corn, the price of cattle, and the rental value of the farms. They were empowered to compel notaries and registrars to exhibit the minutes preserved in their archives regarding leases, agreements, marriage-contracts, probate-sales, deeds of gift, or division of property. Dukes and Archbishops had to submit to these interrogations just like the humblest of day-labourers.

But the King's power, though theoretically unlimited, was in practice obliged to respect tradition and to exercise itself according to prescribed forms. Before effect was given to it, the new tax had to be put through the process of registration, that is to say it had to be copied into the registers of the High Courts. On such occasions the magistrates had the right of remonstrance, and as few corporate bodies stood to lose as much as they did, they employed their privilege to the full. Nevertheless, putting into practice an old stratagem of theirs, they dressed up their own selfish demands in the guise of an extraordinary zeal for the public welfare. According to them it was necessary that the burden should be lifted from the rich, for the sake of the poor, who would otherwise most certainly be reduced to the utmost extremity of destitution and despair. Louis the Fifteenth stood his ground. His only answer to the lachrymose rhetoric of the Paris Parlement was to order it to register the edict without discussion and he gave them two hours to do it in. Overawed by this example, the provincial Parlements obediently came to heel.

Then there was another stumbling block, viz., the States General. The King was only all-powerful in the area left free by the liberties of his lieges. And they were everywhere. In particular five great provinces, Burgundy, Provence, Artois, Languedoc and Brittany, together with certain smaller districts in the North and the Pyrenees, had retained their Assemblies or States, which had the right of voting, assessing and collecting the taxes. A remnant of the old feudal system, these States were not all equally alive. Some merely

lived on the memory of their passed glories, keeping up a ceremonial that was as costly as it was futile. But with some of the others, particularly Brittany and Languedoc, the government was obliged to come to terms. Now the districts where these States existed were under no illusion. They realized to the full how enormously it was in their interests to retain control of finance. The establishment of this new tax would have one disastrous effect, it would bring out into glaring and scandalous relief the gap between what they ought to have paid and what they actually did pay. The deputies would have been the first to figure in this very unenviable limelight. As the duty of drawing up the list was in their hands, they had had until now, every opportunity of making things comfortable for themselves, their relatives, friends and dependents. Against the menace of fiscal equality this little oligarchy of councillors, clerics and nobles, turned and fought with their backs against the wall. Of course, here too, it was not for themselves they were contending. Not at all; their aims were of the most unselfish description – and calculated to have a wonderfully stimulating effect on popular feeling. They spoke of the immemorial rights of the province, the privileges granted them by the Kings of old, the dignity of the commons, the sufferings of the lowly, all the trials and tribulations of bygone years – and so on. The Royal Commissaries to the States of Languedoc, the Intendant Le Nain, and the Maréchal de Richelieu, took shocking fright at their own temerity. It was quite as much fear of complications as sympathy with their own class that led them to perform their office so half-heartedly, and they made far less effort to carry out Machault's orders, than to convince him of the necessity for their mitigation. Machault was not the sort of man to be 'rattled' by anyone. The States refused to pass the budget. They were at once dissolved. For two years the Intendant managed the affairs of the province himself, assisted by a staff of royal officials, better chosen than the provincial staff. The regulations regarding the tax were duly carried out, and with as much celerity as the complexities of the task allowed. This miniature revolution was only responsible for a single victim, and that was the Intendant, whose health was not sufficiently robust to permit him to shoulder all this surplusage of anxiety. Louis the Fifteenth appointed as his successor a guild-master, one Guignard de Saint-Priest, who was just as stubborn as Le Nain was weak. He managed to restore calm, revised the constitution of the States, restricted their financial powers and, in 1752, succeeded in calling together a

submissive assembly that a few formal concessions had completely pacified. 'When,' he commented, 'a few words will make all hearts easy, why hesitate to apply the salve?'

In Brittany, the resistance was more stubborn. All the nobility had the entrée to the States General, and despite the regulations about voting in rotation, they dominated the assembly by shouts and threats and by the general uproar which they contrived to sustain. Unmindful of the fact that the Dukes of Brittany had always been obliged to render homage to their suzerain, the King of France, the Breton nobles pretended to regard the pact of 1532 in the light of a regular international treaty entered into between equally autonomous States. Just as touchy about their titles of nobility as they were harsh and oppressive to the poor and humble, uneducated, unenlightened and generally as poor as Job, these ignorant squirelings fought the more stubbornly to preserve their prerogatives real or supposed. The States General were accompanied by festivals, banquets and drinking bouts which, when the wine began to mount, gave rise to all manner of burlesque encounters in which the national honour was supposed to be at stake. During the session of 1750, the Duc de Chaulnes, the lord lieutenant of the province, ordered the arrest of a drunken man who was creating a disturbance in his hotel, insulting the guests and staggering about among the dancers. Sacrilege! The man's name was M. de Rehinel. All the nobility were up in arms at the outrage and put the King's representative in Coventry. In order to restore peace the Duke was obliged to liberate the prisoner and to go and apologize to the Duc de Rohan, president of the second order.

The States General met every other year. In the interval they delegated their powers to an intermediary commission or, in case of need, to a smaller meeting of their body, numbering two hundred and fifty members only. It was to this minor assembly that Machault made his statement regarding the introduction of the tax. Being flustered and taken by surprise it registered everything that was required of it; then, regretting its obsequiousness, it broke out into loud complaints, saying that it had been bullied and browbeaten into compliance. When the ordinary session of 1750 began its proceedings, only eight thousand of those liable to tax out of a possible four hundred thousand had declared their incomes. There flocked to Rennes more than five hundred gentlemen, a regular mob of them. And then what a tumult ensued! Uproar, shouting, protests, shouts, howls! They refused to deliberate and went on



strike. Nothing was left undone by the ringleaders. But with patience and tact and perseverance, the Duc de Chaulnes got the better of them at last. He contrived, somehow or other, to win over the clergy and the Third Estate, and that eventually brought in the nobles. But this sullen compliance did not make the work of the tax-gatherers any the simpler. The taxpayers did everything they knew in the way of passive resistance and, in the session of 1752, which went on for three months, the nobles again broke out into revolt, using insulting language, so that when an attempt was made to read a letter from the King commanding them to proceed with their deliberations, they made such a din that not a word was audible. Machault was obliged to use stern measures, or to appear to be doing so. He imprisoned some of the ringleaders; others he sent out of the province. The Bishop of Rennes was 'exiled'; that is to say he was commanded to stop at home in his episcopal palace, instead of going and displaying himself at Versailles. These penalties were ridiculously light, and the leaders of the cabal did not omit to brag of the fact. But, on the whole, the Controller-General, had the best of the deal. The principle of the tax was safe. Brittany had obtained neither favour nor commutation.

The third and last obstacle were the clergy. Of all the privileged classes in the Kingdom, there were none more powerful, none more firmly organized than the clergy. Centuries had passed, but there they were as strong as ever. They had on their side the supernatural character of their sacred mission; their unbroken alliance with the three dynasties, the immense services they had rendered to the House of Capet, and the favours, no less immense, with which that House had rewarded them. The States General had fallen into desuetude, the States Provincial into decay, but the Assemblies of the clergy still met together as they had always done, and the Royal Treasurer treated them with a gentleness and a consideration which was henceforth to be withheld from the nobility and the provinces. From time to time, the Clergy had maintained that this special treatment was theirs by right, that their property was by the law of God exempt from all temporal burdens, and that, if they made any contribution towards the public expenses, such contribution was purely an act of grace. In fact, every five years, the Assembly of the Clergy regularly voted the King what it called a free gift, which they would not have dared to withhold, but which they themselves had fixed at a very low figure, making a great point of insisting on its gratuitous character. Moreover, the moneys granted were not

assessed or collected by the government, but by a purely ecclesiastical agency which alone had legal cognizance of the value of Church property and of the income arising from it. In 1726, at the time of the introduction of the 'cinquantième' the clergy had gone the length of wresting from the Duc de Bourbon an explicit acknowledgment of their immunities, couched in the most general terms, without exception or reservation, for the future as well as for the present.

Machault's task therefore looked as if it were fraught with peculiar peril, since he was at once attacking a *de facto* power, and an historic tradition to which the sovereign authority had been imprudent enough to give its official recognition. But if it was hard for him to go forward, to go back was harder still. A surrender would have inflicted a twofold injury on the tax: first of all it would have detracted from its essential character of equality, and, secondly, it would have sensibly diminished its yield. This second point is deserving of a moment's consideration. The value of Church property under the old regime had never been accurately ascertained. Nevertheless, in a monumental work on Machault, M. Marion, in comparing the various estimates that have been put forward, has established, beyond all reasonable doubt, that the annual revenue of the Church for the entire Kingdom, could not have been less than some hundred and twenty millions, out of which, taking every possible item into account, it paid away no more than three or four millions. And even this slender contribution was most inequitably assessed. Recruited as it was from the ranks of the highest nobility, the episcopate, like the nobility, was fond of display, prodigal of its wealth, and deeply in debt. A Rohan, a La Rochefoucauld, a Fitz-James would have held up their hands in horror at having to part with the merest trifle. So, for the King's present, they subscribed the most absurdly small sums, leaving it to their *curés* to make up the required total, as was befitting for the common herd.

When Machault broke up the States of Languedoc, one of the prelates who had a seat in the Assembly, François de Lastic de Saint-Jol, Bishop of Castres, expressed his astonishment to the Maréchal de Richelieu, 'for,' said he, 'it is strange that the Assembly, convened by a letter signed *Louis*, should be dissolved by a letter signed *Machault*. This Controller-General who seems to hold us in such small esteem should remember that my ancestors have shed more blood in the service of the King, than his ancestors ever shed ink.'

Knowing that his adversaries were very strong, Machault tried to divide them, on the one hand exploiting the ill-feeling that naturally

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existed between the higher and lower clergy, and, on the other, by setting against the old ecclesiastical provinces, those which had come into being after the sixteenth century and whose finances were differently organized. If he could obtain declarations of income from a good number of bishops, it would be difficult for the rest to maintain that the law of God dispensed the clergy from the obligation to pay taxes. But in spite of a few successes in Flanders, he was unable to impair the cohesion of the order as a whole, and when the Assembly of 1750 began, he had gained nothing for his trouble but a series of haughty and indignant refusals. One can readily imagine the storms of protest that filled the hall at every session. Though he was willing to discuss the rate of the impost, though he even went the length of offering to apply it to a reduction of the clergy's debts, there was one point on which the Controller refused to budge an inch, and that was the matter of the obligatory declaration. After a deal of uproar, the Assembly was dissolved. The King refused to listen to the delegation which it sent to lay its case before him; and everyone of the bishops was commanded to return to his diocese without delay, and to remain there. A few months later, on the retirement of the Chancellor Dagesseau, Machault, without relinquishing his control of Finance, took on the duties of Keeper of the Seals, and this unusual concentration of such high offices in his single person was regarded as a conspicuous mark of royal favour. When the period within which the clergy were required to lodge their declarations had elapsed without their obeying the mandate, it was regarded as certain that the King would proceed against them with rigour and sequester the property of the recalcitrant order. But suddenly, on December 23rd, 1751, an order in council suspended the levying of the tax on Church property and, in the Assembly of 1755, this temporary dispensation was by a common accord tacitly allowed to become absolute. What had happened, and how are we to explain so unlooked for and humiliating a surrender?

Whatever the influence of Madame de Pompadour upon him, Louis the Fifteenth always retained a lively faith in religion. He was always liable to visitations of remorse for the things he had done, and, whenever he was seized with the slightest illness, he was a prey to qualms of conscience which made him regardless of any mundane obligation. But no sooner did the illness depart, than the fear of hell departed with it; yet there lingered on a sort of sub-conscious sentiment of the obedience he owed to the Church. Moreover, if, in ordinary circumstances, Louis, as a man and a

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Christian, had come to regard the Sacraments and the ministrations of the priest as of small account, he was none the less resolved, that, as King, no such reproach should attach to him. In him, the royal conscience was stronger than the human one. He was a transgressor, an adulterer? Well, those are faults and failings which concern the individual alone, however blameworthy. But His Most Christian Majesty must conduct himself as such. Let the faults of the man be answered for by the man, but let not the day come when his subjects should reproach him for having given offence to Heaven and averted from his kingdom the protection of Almighty God. The more scandalous his private life appeared to him, the more firmly he resolved that his public life should show no stain. To annihilate the immunities which were represented to him as ordained by God, to repudiate his Coronation vows, to lay low all that his ancestors had built up or held in veneration – what a terrible responsibility was that for a King who was the Eldest Son of the Church, and who had so many sins to answer for!

Had he been more deeply versed in his religion, Louis the Fifteenth would have drawn some necessary distinctions. Very firm in the faith, a punctual attendant at the Church's services, and a regular communicant, Machault, for his part, never suffered himself to become involved in disputes about dogma. The persistent silence of Pope Benedict the Fourteenth, was in itself enough to show how hazardous were the claims of the French clergy. But to catch the conscience of the King, the clerical party had a way of forcing every barrier, and they corrupted him by playing on the best thing there was about him, and that was the love he bore his children.

Machault was easily predominant in the Council and Government. Of the opposition, the Dauphin did not count at all; Cardinal de Tencin had ceased to count, and the new chancellor Lamoignon had not yet begun to count. D'Argenson was the only one who could have offered any resistance, and he was far too good a courtier to take sides prominently against his master. In private circles, Madame de Pompadour, who hated the religious party, her enemies, with all her heart, upheld the Controller with might and main. Through her it was that the radical arguments put forward by the philosophers got as far as the King's ears. On the other hand, Louis never missed a day without spending some hours with his daughter-in-law and her daughters. He was very fond of them all, and the homecoming of the two younger girls, who had finished their schooling at the convent, made things all the pleasanter. The young

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ladies were very devout and very obedient to their confessor. Though he dared not open his mouth in front of his father, the Dauphin still kept up friendly relations, personally and by letter, with the most obstinate and aggressive members of the ecclesiastical party, such as the Archbishop of Paris, Christophe de Beaumont, the Archbishop of Sens, the Bishop of Amiens, the Abbé de Nicolai, the future Bishop of Verdun, Père Griffet, the former Bishop of Mirepoix, Boyer who had charge of the distribution of benefices. They primed him abundantly with arguments, notes and documents. The Cabal, its members well together, and plentifully victualled, chose the best commandant they possibly could have chosen, a general of eighteen, Madame Adelaide. She was the one the King liked best, ardent, passionate, highly educated, with a measureless hatred of Madame de Pompadour and of anything and everything new. So the long friendly gossipings, the pleasant restful atmosphere, full of tenderness and playfulness in which the King had daily come to refresh his troubled spirit – all this was gone for ever. Henceforth it was nothing but battle, with the smell of gunpowder in the air. Assailed with glum or reproachful looks, pained at feeling the children hostile and strained, Louis had either to argue or to command them to silence. And then came a still shrewder blow. His former mistress, Madame de Mailly, died almost suddenly, with a great display of repentance. According to her wishes, she was interred in the Cimetière des Innocents, the cemetery where paupers and beggars were buried by the parish. It was said that she had asked to be buried in a felon's grave, but this the clergy had disallowed, judging her humiliation sufficient.

In 1751, the Jubilee, which had been celebrated the year before in Rome, to implore the divine grace on the coming half-century, was now to be observed in France. As a rule the ceremonies on these occasions were fairly modest, but now the Bishops thought well to invest them with an air of grandeur and pathos, of melancholy splendour, so as to give the idea that religion was threatened by some new and terrible scourge. In Paris, the faithful were enjoined to betake themselves to prayer in sixty different churches, at the rate of four a day for fifteen successive days. Each parish was called upon to organize sixty processions to visit sixty churches, beginning with Notre-Dame and Sainte-Geneviève. For several months on end France was swept by a torrent of devotion of the most fervent intensity. Paris echoed and re-echoed unceasingly to the sound of bells and canticles. At all hours, processions might be seen passing along

through two rows of people kneeling in silent prayer. The first processions were followed by such an enormous crowd that Notre-Dame was not vast enough to hold all the processionists that presented themselves at the doors. People were literally smothered, and the Cathedral was like a place besieged, so enormous was the crowd that followed the banners of the religious orders. Between Notre-Dame and Sainte-Genève, the press of people was so tremendous that several persons fainted and not a few were hurt. At Sainte-Marguerite's in the Faubourg Saint-Antoine, the people had to stand in a queue for half an hour in the pouring rain before they could get in. At Saint-Severin the attendance was so huge that the parishioners, tired of waiting, left their *curé* to take care of himself, and went off in a procession of their own to Saint-André-des-Arts. At Saint-Germain l'Auxerrois and Saint-Etienne du Mont, forty Swiss guards were unable to control the crowd, who forced their way through the barriers. 'The public,' wrote Barbier, 'have so changed their predilections that they are now for putting the Jubilee before Holy Week.' The Court itself made a point of going to hear Père Griffet. In their diocesan charges, the Bishops gave out that the days of persecution were at hand, but that if Machault persisted in seizing their property, they would withdraw to the seminaries and give up celebrating public worship, thus laying the country under a species of interdict.

Louis the Fifteenth had plenty of reasons to be alarmed. Besides, what allies was he to look for to stand up for him against the clergy? Would it be the Parlements who, by the way, wanted to make a naughty schoolboy of him, and pestered him with insolent remonstrances? Or the philosophers, that band of atheists, who, in their hearts, were republicans, and hated the Throne as cordially as they hated the Altar? Of this struggle, which went on for a year, the memorials of the time only bring us vague and half-stifled echoes; 'The King went to hear a sermon; the King has had a talk with Cardinal de Rochefoucauld; Madame de Pompadour is unwell; the Keeper of the Seals has been commanded to initiate the Dauphin into the affairs of State; the King has had a conversation with Père Perusseau; they say that the Chancellor is getting more influence', and so on, and so forth. But what really was it that caused the King to surrender? What was in his mind when, silent and thoughtful, he came back from his solitary hunting expeditions? That we shall never know. Was it threats, or remorse, or weariness, or fear of too great an upheaval that made him at last give in? Perhaps it was all

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these things combined. But having brought himself to yield, a feeling of humiliation made him try to keep his surrender a secret. The edict whereby the tax on Church property was suspended, was not given to the public, only the exact number required for the Courts of Justice, the Intendants and the bishops were printed; but the precaution was unavailing. No one was taken in. 'The Clergy have come out top,' wrote Barbier in his *Journal* . . . 'There's no denying that the ecclesiastical genus is a long armed race, and one that makes you a little bit afraid.'

But if the Church had defeated the King, it had lowered itself in the popular estimation. Paris had as yet no daily papers. Reviews and gazettes were published under special authority, and they had to mind their 'P's and Q's'. But there *was* a political press, for all that, under another form. That was the topical pamphlet, the ballad, the pasquinade, the single-sheeted broadside, which, week by week, were snapped up like hot-cakes. Some few were approved by the censor; but most of them came out without the name of author or printer, and drew on themselves the thunders of the Parlement, the Sorbonne and the Police. But the thunderbolts were damp squibs. When they fell, the offending print had long since got home and, for all that it was solemnly 'suppressed' or 'burnt', continued to be sold on the quiet, and was all the more eagerly devoured because it was banned. The taxation quarrel called forth, within a space of two years, several hundreds of Letters, Observations, Notes, Communications, Speeches, Defences, etc., not to mention a number of formidable dogmatic tomes, stuffed full of quotations and recondite references.

The clerical immunities controversy was the occasion for a prodigious expenditure of useless learning. Both sides flung the Bible, the Councils and the Fathers at each other's heads. But in putting their impossible privileges under heavenly protection, the clergy had made a very big mistake; they drew, upon religion itself, the shafts which should have been directed solely against the selfishness of its ministers. This episode in the history of fiscal finance is also a turning point in the history of ideas. It is true that the people had always showered their raillery on the priests and the monks, and had delighted in buffooning them. In 1731, a certain Père Girard, charged with the seduction of a young female penitent, became the hero of scores of salacious couplets.

Père Girard n'est plus Jesuite  
Avec Vénus il veut chasser. . . .

But jocular, good-humoured anticlericalism was incompatible neither with faith nor piety. It respected the Church, whatever it thought of her clerics, and laid no sacrilegious fingers on her doctrines. But the way in which the clergy insisted on putting forward the name of God in order to evade the payment of a perfectly equitable tax gave rise to a feeling of reprobation and resentment of which the philosophers made prompt use in order to insinuate their doctrines into a world hitherto unsympathetic to them. The year 1750 marks the beginning among the lower middle classes, of their animosity to the priesthood, and it was under favour of this new attitude of mind that the Encyclopaedists began their grand attack upon religion.

Bayle's famous Dictionary had been published in Amsterdam more than sixty years before. The whole polemical arsenal of the eighteenth century was to be found within its pages. It was the munition-store on which the philosophers drew for the weapons – historical, philological and theological – with which they armed themselves in their savage onslaught on the Church. All they had to do was to select, to sharpen and to polish them. Bayle had taken hold of the Church's dogmatic system and employed all his energy in making a purely human thing of it, and in doing his best to show that it was full of contradictions, errors and improbabilities. But Bayle was ponderous, terribly learned, and ill-arranged. The philosophers cut him up into little brochures, light and entertaining. The tax war gave them the wide public whose ear they had hitherto been unable to gain. On the face of it, their sole aim was to help the statesman in his stand against clerical pretensions. But under cover of this demonstration, they tossed in pell-mell countless quips against the celibacy of the clergy, against the monastic life, against prayer, against episcopal cupidity, against the wealth of convents and against the divine institution of the Church. A pamphleteer with clerical sympathies remarks that 'these attacks on religion were snapped up with a positively frenzied eagerness'. It was the same old method of attack. In the *Embellissements de Cachemire* for example, an Indian philosopher and a man-about-town fall to discussing a procession of monks which they see passing by:

'Those are fine upstanding fellows going along there,' says the Indian. 'How many like that have you got in your country?'



'About a hundred thousand of one sort or another,' says the bostandji.

'Fine fellows, those, to work at beautifying Cashmir,' said the philosopher. 'How I should love to see them handling the shovel, the trowel and the square.'

'So should I,' said the bostandji, 'but they are too great saints to work.'

'What do they do, then?' asked the Indian.

'They sing, and drink and digest their food,' said the bostandji.

'How useful that must be to the State,' said the Indian.

That is exactly in the manner of Voltaire; the tone and spice of *Candide* are already there.

In his secret heart, Machault felt that the zeal of his allies was a little compromising. If in some respects their support was satisfactory, in others it was decidedly embarrassing, and from time to time he would disavow the connection. But he had to put up with them nevertheless, for the simple reason that he had no one else to back him. The gravity of the moral disturbance caused by these polemics, may be gauged from the fact that, in 1751, the Protestants of Languedoc went so far as to take it upon themselves to address a memorial to the Controller pointing out how favourably their own well-known loyalty to the government and their punctuality in paying the moneys due by them to the State, compared with the factious insubordination of the Catholic clergy. The pamphlet caused a considerable sensation. People who cry out about oppression when their own privileges are interfered with, prate loudly of the things of heaven, when in point of fact, it is only the things of earth that are at stake. . . . Wherever ecclesiastics enjoy credit and authority, anybody who refuses to give himself up to them body and soul, is bound to have an uncomfortable time of it.

'The best thing,' interposed Voltaire slyly in the *Voix du Sage et du peuple*, 'that could happen to the human race, is that the country should be ruled by philosophers.'

Blinded by their victory over Machault, the bishops never seem to have suspected into what depths of discredit they were about to fall. Quite the contrary. In order to bind the King to their cause beyond recall, in order that he should dig with his own hands an impassable ditch between himself and the reforming party, they committed the egregious folly of suddenly rekindling the old Jansenist quarrel, which had been dormant for twenty years. Of the Jansenists hardly any now remained, yet it did happen that one would die every now

and again. The Archbishop of Beaumont commanded his clergy to refuse the Sacraments to all the dying who could not produce a certificate attesting that they had confessed to a priest who had subscribed to the bull *Unigenitus*. Now, the belief was currently held among the people, that for a Christian to be saved it sufficed that he should repent of his sins and summon a priest to his death bed. 'The clergy,' said a Councillor in the Rouen Parlement, 'are the ministers, not the masters, of the Sacraments, and when they administer them they are not conferring a favour, but performing a duty.' What was to be done then, if they refused to perform their duty? Report the matter to their superiors, and, if no satisfaction was to be got out of them, bring an action at law.

And so when any person suspected of Jansenism fell ill, here forsooth, was Parlement called on to furnish a confessor to shrive the sick man, because the clergy they had sent for had refused to come! O heaven-sent bliss! Reduced to silence ever since the shoddy miracles of Deacon Pâris, the Jansenists were overjoyed to have their chance of making themselves heard. True aspirants to the crown of martyrdom, it was extraordinary how they always managed to apply for absolution to the very priests who were most fully determined not to give it to them. The priest is sent for; he refuses to come; legal proceedings; subpœnas applied for; date fixed for hearing; counsel state case; evidence considered; verdict. A bailiff is sent to the recalcitrant cleric. It is stated, as a solemn fact, that at the foot of the summons, a priest called upon to administer the Sacrament to a dying person might read this magnificent announcement: 'And in default thereof, these presents shall be regarded as valid for Viaticum.' The Archbishop renews his prohibition, and is cited to appear before the Court. He fails to do so. Summons, facts recited, verdict: property sequestrated, curès served with a writ. It positively hails convictions; condemnations, admonitions, fines, banishments, imprisonments. The same sort of thing all over the country. The Rennes Parlement went still further. For non-payment of fine it sold up the furniture of the Bishop of Nantes, and sequestrated the revenues of the Bishop of Vannes. At Verneuil, in the diocese of Evreux, the curé, threatened with arrest, said Mass, guarded by a company of archers under arms, all ready to run the bailiff's man through the body if occasion required it. It was a veritable panic. Some priests took to flight; others went into hiding. In vain the King endeavoured to restore peace and still the strife of tongues. When madness reigned supreme he was the only one to

keep his head and to act for the public good. Taking a leaf out of Fleury's book, he made his Council sole judge in regard to all matters connected with the Bull, quashed any verdicts of the Parlements that went counter to it, and suppressed the bishops' charges. The bishops pretended not to understand, and the Parlements jibbed, protested, remonstrated and refused to function. Machault's policy was to play off one side against the other, in order to put his clergy-tax on its legs again, on the one hand getting the Parlements forcibly to impose it on the clergy; on the other, getting the clergy to indemnify him for supporting them against the Parlements. But, egged on thereto by some youthful firebrands of councillors, the Paris Parlement took upon itself to discuss certain prerogatives of the kingly office. They promptly found themselves in the street. The conflict came to an unexpected termination. As the years went on, the little Jansenist flock grew smaller and smaller. For lack of dying men, the number of 'incidents' fell off. In 1754, Michault, while retaining the Seals, relinquished his post as Controller-General and went to the Navy; and, the following year, the clergy succeeded in making peace with the King. Abroad, however, things had begun to look black. Troubles came thick and fast in Canada. People talked of nothing but vessels seized, crews kidnapped, outrages committed on our shores, our Flag insulted. The King of England exorcised the ghost of Jansenius and the guns drowned the jabber of the lawyers.

The battle once over, it was perfectly plain that the victory lay neither with the Jansenists, nor the Molinists, nor the Parlement, nor the Church; it lay with the philosophers. There had been a fierce hubbub about grace, original sin, the sacraments and the conditions of salvation. In the heat of the battle, each side had made the most of its own saints and doctors, and as little as possible of the adversary's; but from all this clash of convincing, but contradictory, arguments, from the welter of so many infallible, yet mutually hostile, authorities, doubt and scepticism were the only issue. When the clerics dispute, the sceptics confute. Eye-witnesses of the scandal and disturbances, the primary victim of the agitation, sometimes without judges, sometimes without pastors, the people came inevitably to ask themselves whether the thing in dispute was worth all the pother it stirred up. Was religion worth all this turmoil? And would folks go on fighting to the end of time for doctrines so obscure and so involved that even the most learned were powerless to unravel them. 'If men were reasonable beings,' wrote Voltaire in *les Idées de le Mothe-Vayer*, 'they would have a religion capable of doing good and

incapable of doing ill. What is a dangerous religion? Clearly the religion which, by laying down incomprehensible dogmas, necessarily encourages men to explain those dogmas, each in his own manner and so stirs up quarrels, feuds and civil war.'

From the speculations in which Barbier indulges regarding the origins of the various cults, the basis of miracles and the vagueness of the prophecies, we may gauge how swiftly doubt and scepticism were already permeating the ranks of the middle and lower middle classes. . . . Moreover Barbier, writing in 1752, assures us that if little shop-keepers bought the Archbishops manifestos against the Encyclopaedia, it was solely in order to read the forbidden matter, and thus acquaint themselves with what the philosophers were saying against religion. 'During the wars between the Parlements and the Bishops,' wrote Voltaire to d'Alembert, 'the men of reason had the time of their lives, and you will be able to cram the Encyclopaedia to your heart's content with things no one would have dared to say twenty years ago.' (From a letter dated November 13th, 1756.)

But if religion did not come unscathed out of the combat, neither did the royal authority. No one, so far, had attacked it in principle, but many were growing sceptical of its power. It had worn itself thin in blowing hot and cold, veering and oscillating between punishments and pardons. The clergy, by disobedience and rank rebellion, had won for themselves a shameful exemption from tax, and, in so doing, they had set the masses an example which they were not likely to forget. Since insubordination was looked at calmly, since it was condoned and even rewarded, who was likely to submit to authority in the future? The only ones to pay would be those who were not sufficiently powerful to obtain exemption. No sooner had Michault quitted the helm than the privileged classes began to hold up their heads and put themselves into fighting trim in order to coerce his successor into granting the rebates, their funds, and the reliefs which Michault had stubbornly refused them. Treated in this way, the tax became an ordinary impost, like the rest, with all their imperfections; distorted, ramshackle, inefficiently collected and but feebly remunerative.

All this was brought out into strong relief when the war compelled the government to add a second *vingtième* to the first. The declaration of July 7th, 1756, which was responsible for thus doubling the tax burden, marked also the abandonment at all attempts at reform, and a pitiable return to the bad old ways. Not only was the second *vingtième* to cease with the war, but the first also was to disappear ten years later, to the great comfort and relief of the rich people

and the nobility. It goes without saying that all the dishonest tricks and subterfuges which regularly accompanied the assessment of the poll-tax, were destined to come into operation in regard to the *vingtième*. Nevertheless the magistrates opposed the declaration tooth and nail, and it was only with the utmost difficulty that the Government got their measure through. At Paris, Toulouse, Besançon, Bordeaux and Montauban, it had to endure, from the Parlements and the *Cours des Aides*, all manner of insolent remonstrances crammed full of mendacious allegations and furious diatribes against the tax-inspectors, whom they described as secret emissaries, vagabonds, scurvy ruffians, unprincipled riff-raff, men of no political convictions, who went prowling about the country, secretly fomenting hatred, envy, and class-warfare, working on the ignorance of the peasants and appealing to their selfishness by giving them to understand that their aim was to lighten their burdens, by casting them on the shoulders of the aristocracy. That was the 'head and front' of the Government's offence; demanding that all should bear their equitable share of a burden which the rich and powerful had felt it so convenient to cast wholly on the shoulders of the common people.

To do the King justice it must be put on record that he had once again stood up for the interests of the many against the selfish machinations of the few. But the people had given him no aid. With an obliquity of vision not uncommon in circumstances of this kind, they had seen in the *vingtième* merely an additional tax, whereas, in reality, it was an instrument of relief. Though they hated the clergy, the masses had none the less showered applause on the States and the Parlements, given the King a cold reception whenever he drove through Paris, and backed up the opposition of the rich and powerful, the very people of whom they were the victims in chief. In 1750, the Comte d'Argenson had resolved to clear Paris of the beggars that infested it. But, in the course of one of the round-ups, a number of children who were playing in the streets, were taken off by the officials and kept for several days in a casual ward. Some of the police were even said to have demanded money from the parents of the children as the price of their release. The rumour got abroad that the Government intended to set the press-gang to work to obtain emigrants for the colonies and, suddenly on May 22nd, rioting broke out simultaneously in four different places. A plain-clothes policeman who was recognized in a porch, was done to death, and the Lieutenant of Police was besieged in his residence by ten thousand demonstrators. It was several hours before the police,

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assisted by troops, succeeded in restoring order. Contemporary records, one and all, refer to the sinister and savage character of the rising. Inflammatory speeches were made, urging the people to march on Versailles, cast out the King, and set fire to the Château. So, as a preliminary measure, a guard was set at Meudon and the Pont de Sèvres. The whole affair had been so mysterious and unforeseen that many people thought it must be a plot to scare Louis the Fifteenth and Madame de Pompadour; but no evidence was ever discovered to lend support to such a conjecture. If, however, that single day of riot and bloodshed remained without a sequel, it shows nevertheless to what a pitch of excitement the people of Paris had come. And yet a strictly administered *vingtième* would have paved the way for an overhaul of the *taille*. Taxes on the lower orders would have been progressively reduced, the State debt cleared off and the rate of interest diminished. With a well-furnished Treasury, France might have carried on the war with greater credit and success. To praise the Parlements for holding up taxation and, in the same breath, to blame the King for not spending enough on the Navy, would surely be the height of inconsequence. It is a pity that some historians have failed to recognize that fact.

But just when popular passions were at their height, the Damiens' attempt on the King's life (January, 1757), threw the whole kingdom into a state of profound disquietude and, for a time, silence was restored. 'In Paris,' writes the faithful Barbier, 'consternation was general, and few were the people who refrained from shedding tears. A letter from the Archbishop was read commanding that the Forty Hours' Prayer should be recited in all the Churches. Priests and monks, overcome with emotion, were scarcely able to intone the *Salvum fac regem*; the congregations were equally affected. It was only the intense cold that prevented the whole of Paris gathering together simultaneously in the churches and the streets to learn tidings of the King, and to wait for messengers to arrive from anywhere and everywhere. But people kept on going or sending to the Palais, the Hôtel de Ville and the Post Office, where the bulletins were posted up; I myself sent four times a day. Very soon came reassuring news, and people began to ponder and discuss a deed as surprising as it was distressing.' At first it was the English who were blamed, because of the war, then it was ascribed to an outbreak of fanaticism, arising out of the religious troubles. But every party had its fanatics. . . . Whom were they going to fix upon? The Jesuits? The clergy as a whole? The Jansenists? The Parlementfolk? When he was questioned,

the criminal himself said on several occasions, that his head had been turned by Parliamentary speeches about the misfortunes of the State. 'If I had never entered a Court of Justice and had stayed on in the service of army people, I should never have got here.' Thus compromised, the magistrates were only too anxious to lie low.

At Versailles, the King was all for hushing things up. Weary of fruitless agitations, weary too of seeing all his best-intentioned acts wilfully perverted and caricatured to look like outrageous tyranny; and fearing, in spite of all the popular manifestations of sympathy, that he had forfeited the love of his people, he would have liked to take advantage of the circumstances to bring back peace and concord to his subjects, and unite them as one man against the foe.

How was it to be done? It seemed to the King that the surest way of stopping the combat was to suppress the combatants. The Archbishop was to remain in his Palace at Conflans. The Parlement men, who had been relegated to the four corners of the kingdom, should remain where they were; certain Councillors of the Upper Chamber should also be sent away from Paris. Finally Michault, hated by the clergy as the originator of the *Vingtème*, by the States as the enemy of their privileges, by the royal courts as head of the magistracy, even Machault, Machault himself, would have to go. But if he was obliged to resign his offices, d'Argenson his rival, the Jesuits' man, should also be made to resign *his*, and to give up the War Office and the Police. Drastic measures against the secret printing and disseminating of pamphlets and lampoons would put the finishing touch on the process of pacification. It was given out that the two statesmen had been dismissed because, after the attack on the King, they had advised Madame de Pompadour to leave Versailles and retire to the country. A childish idea. Bernis, who took a close view of things, does, it is true, confirm that the Marquise could not bear either Machault or d'Argenson, but he also gives the real reason for their fall. The King was persuaded that d'Argenson 'with his criticisms stirred up the fires of discord', that 'he had not kept a sharp enough eye on the Paris Parlement' that he had 'been too easy-going with the authors of seditious broadsides' and 'tolerated' disorder. As for Machault, the King found it sore to part with him. He sacrificed him with regret, and only because he had at last come to think 'that the Parlements would never settle down in peace, as long as the Keeper of the Seals remained in office'. 'They have led me such a dance,' he wrote to the Infanta, 'that they have forced me to dismiss Machault, a man after my own heart; I shall never get over it.'

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All the same, he went out of his way to show that, though he threw over the man, he found no fault with his policy. This was all d'Argenson got, by way of good-bye; just this short note: 'Monsieur d'Argenson, having no further need of your services, I command you to hand me your resignation of your office as Secretary of State for War, and of your other posts, and to withdraw to your Estate at les Ormes.' The letter to Machault was not like that. It was, in fact, cordial, almost affectionate. 'Monsieur de Machault,' it ran, 'although I am convinced of your probity and the uprightness of your intentions, the circumstances of the time compel me to ask you to hand me back my Seals and to resign your position as Secretary of State for the Navy. Always rely on my goodwill and friendship. If there is anything you would like me to do for your children, at any time, never hesitate to ask me. It will be well for you to remain for a time at Arnouville. I am going on paying you the emoluments of your office, 20,000 livres and am retaining you in your honorary rank as Keeper of the Seals.'

D'Argenson wasted away with mortification, boredom and ambition. He died with a head full of plans and projects, and the longing to live and reign. Machault bore his retirement philosophically and put on flesh. He lived long enough to die of old age and grief in some prison, under the Terror. The King kept the Seals himself. D'Argenson was succeeded by his nephew Paulmy, Machault by Peirenc de Moras. The former was fat, and the latter was thin, but both were slender in brains and talent. Bernis was the great man on the Council, but Bernis was done up, and soon passed out. The taxation quarrel had made it impossible to clean up the Finances; it had ruined the debt redemption fund and, at the start of a big war, it had deprived the King of his ablest advisers. A century and a half after the event, we can easily see how it happened. At the time, people thought the King had consolidated the Monarchy. 'One is bound to admit,' writes the worthy Barbier, 'that since the attempt on his life, the King has borne himself like a hero, and a great-hearted man. He had not, at that time, any idea of what might be the effects of such a wound, but, straightway, without a sign of fear he gave his attention not only to spiritual matters but also to affairs of state. Since his recovery, he has kept on striking home, and showing people that he is King.'

Must we then draw the conclusion that even in his weakness there was still a sufficient shadow of grandeur about Louis the Fifteenth to create the illusion of real power?



## CHAPTER X

# THE EXPULSION OF THE JESUITS AND THE REVOLT OF THE GREAT LANDOWNERS

FLEURY had lasted twenty-seven years, Orry fifteen, Daguesseau thirty-three, Maurepas thirty-one, Machault twelve, and d'Argenson fourteen. Though he was not Prime Minister, Machault had figured as such. Several months of uncertainty and instability followed upon his downfall. There were ministers who only remained in office for eighteen months or two years. That seemed the very limit of irregularity and chaos. One Controller-General in fact only held on for eight months. He was called *Silhouette*. His name became proverbial for a fleeting shadow, a transient and embarrassed phantom. At the end of 1758, when Bernis had relinquished the Secretaryship of State for Foreign Affairs as well as his seat on the Council, he was succeeded by a man of quite a different calibre, the Duc de Choiseul. He was a native of Lorraine and a man of very good family. After the War of the Polish Succession, his father, the Marquis de Stainville, had accompanied Duke Francis to Florence and had accepted the position of Tuscan Ambassador in Paris. The appointment, which was worth thirty thousand *livres*, was a sinecure. M. de Stainville perfected himself in the art of eating, and acquired an honourable reputation as a gourmet. By his one and only marriage he had five children: three sons and two daughters. The eldest of the boys entered the service of France. He is the minister of our narrative. The second went over to Austria; the third entered the Church and died an Archbishop. One of the daughters married the Duc de Gramont; the other became a canoness. There were a great many cousins, male and female, and the family spirit was very strong among them all.

When he was twenty, Choiseul joined the Army. He took part in the Bohemian campaign and went through the Siege of Prague. He also saw service on the Rhine, and fought in Flanders under Maurice de Saxe and Loewendahl. In 1739, he was a Second-Lieutenant, Colonel in 1743 and Brigadier-General in 1748. Peace came and made him a man of leisure. In 1750 he married the granddaughter of Crozat, the Financier. His bride was only fifteen, charming,

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dainty, graceful, with fine eyes, an expressive face, a soft and musical voice. Her contemporaries never wearied of singing her praises, her excellent qualities of heart and mind. After the first year, her husband was unfaithful. Meantime, the story runs that, by means of a pilfered letter, he had managed to enable Madame de Pompadour to rid herself of a rival, one of his own relations, Madame de Choiseul-Romanet. The story was famous, and, perhaps, as false as it was famous. At all events fortune and favour were a long time coming. Promoted Brigadier, Choiseul, for some months, was employed on garrison-duty on the frontier. At last, on his return – the year was 1754 – he was, to the despair of the ladies, appointed Ambassador at Rome, whence he was transferred, three years later, to Vienna.

Choiseul was hardly cut out for the part of Don Juan, for he was short and plain. He had a broad, bare forehead, small, bright eyes, thick lips, a turn-up nose, red hair, a well-proportioned figure and a shapely leg. People in general dreaded his cutting speeches and heartless raillery, but his friends all praised his kindness, his generosity, his free and open ways. Like some enthusiastically romantic page, he made wild love to the women, because he felt drawn to them and because he liked to conquer and humble them, to lie to them and then give them the go-by. Moreover, he was full of sparkle and intelligence, daring, extravagant, magnificent, treating money like dirt, caring neither for fatigue nor rest, flinging himself with equal ardour into work and pleasure; fond of fame, as ambitious on the King's account as he was on his own, always light-hearted, always resolute and ready for anything. 'Never,' writes one of his intimates, the Baron de Gleichen, 'never did I know a man who had such a way of making every one about him happy and contented; when he went into a room it seemed as though he dived into his pockets and drew out an inexhaustible stock of fun and gaiety.' This good humour was the index of an equable and well-tempered disposition. It was another form of steadfastness and energy. Bernis who knew the Duke well, realized that. 'You have a strong nerve,' he wrote, 'you have courage, and things don't affect you so deeply as they do me.' And in a report to the King, this is how he spoke of his future successor: 'M. de Choiseul has given proof of patience, courage and skill. His steadfastness of nerve has almost always kept his natural vivacity under due control . . . he is a soldier; but he is also a politician . . . he can draft a plan of campaign or revise the plans of others . . . he is a great worker, active, resourceful, full of devices and very much less put out by things than I am.'

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Choiseul was accused of being an atheist. He countered the charge by punctually performing the minimum of his religious duties. But these observances were purely perfunctory. Choiseul ate meat on Fridays, favoured the philosophers, kept up a friendly correspondence with Voltaire, and welcomed all the anti-religious people to his house. By bringing the taxation measure to nought, the clergy had put the State under the thumb of the Parlements. For lack of sufficient revenue to carry on, the King had either to lower his flag to the English, or to keep the war going by constant appeals for fresh credit. But you cannot compel people's confidence by legal measures, or by threats. A loan forced on the public so to speak, without the backing of the magistrates, would never have been covered. Seeing there was nothing for it but to throw someone to the wolves, Choiseul thought he might as well let them have the Jesuits. Anti-clericalism, or anti-Jesuitism, would act as a sort of red-herring, divert the financial opposition and restore freedom of action to the needy government.

In 1741, there had sailed for Martinique a Jesuit known as Père La Valette, whose particular vocation was – trade! The house owned by the Company at St. Pierre was hopelessly in debt. In order to square the creditors, Père Valette went in for farming, as well as trading in sugar and slaves. His enterprise was going well. Then the English took six of his ships, and owing to the war he was unable to send his sugar to Europe. A cyclone and an epidemic completed the ruin of his business. The drafts which he had sent his correspondents in Europe were protested and he himself was made bankrupt. Among the creditors was a Marseilles firm, Lionci and Gouffre, who were involved to the tune of a million and a half. The firm in question, in proceedings instituted before the court of consular jurisdiction, cited, as being a responsible representative of the Society, Père de Sacy, procurator-general of missions in France, and they applied for a writ of sequestration on all property belonging to the Order throughout the Kingdom. The verdict going against them in the lower court, the Fathers appealed to the Paris Parliament, where they counted on there being, among the judges, many of their former pupils. This rash act was their undoing. Certainly their affairs were very perplexed. Thanks to the property they held in every country, to their missionary settlement in Paraguay, thanks, above all, to the credit they enjoyed throughout Christendom, the Jesuits were not only a religious, but a financial power, something like an international banking concern, with multiple

branches. In Italy and in Spain, people were in the habit of putting money on deposit in their Houses. Repayable on demand, these deposits bore interest at the rate of two per cent. But, like all bankers, the fathers only kept in hand sufficient liquid assets to meet the normal demands for repayment. The balance they invested in agricultural undertakings, or in commercial or manufacturing concerns, usually well-chosen and very remunerative. They advanced money on mortgage, subscribed to government loans and carried out, on their clients' behalf, the ordinary business of banking and exchange. 'The public confidence which they had merited, not only by reason of their wealth, but by the punctuality with which they always discharged their liabilities, led people to deposit with them very considerable sums of money, which skilful management on their part caused to earn high rates of interest without exciting either criticism or misgivings.' These are the words of our envoy at Naples. But now this excellent reputation was compromised, not so much by the failure of Père La Valette – for that was due to an accident no one could have foreseen – as by the Society's obstinacy in refusing to acknowledge responsibility for the liabilities of one of their own people.

Furthermore, the Jesuits, all the world over, were recognized as soldiers of Rome, and champions of ultramontaniam. It was urged against them as a reproach that they were paramount in the colleges and confessionals. They were accused of harbouring vast ambitions for gaining possession of the things of this world, of constantly meddling in political matters, of tyrannizing over the consciences of their penitents; in short, of trying to establish a universal monarchy, with the Pope at the head of it and of making use of religion to further their secular ends. The sympathies of Parlement were Jansenist and Gallican. Doubtless, its Jansenism by this time had lost most of its Port-Royal flavour. You could belong to the party without subscribing to its dogmas, or even to its religion. The great Arnaud was a name far less often in the mouths of the adepts than Edmond Richer, a seventeenth century theologian, an ex-member of the Ligue, who had thrown over his old allegiance and rejected the Papal Supremacy as well as the decrees of the Council of Trent. The 'Richerists' held that, in the constitution of the Church, the Papacy played but an accessory part, that the bishops themselves possessed all pontifical powers, but also that the *curés*, successors of the seventy-two disciples, were not subject to the unlimited control of the bishops, that Jesus had transmitted to them His priestly powers

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intact, and that, gathered together in lawful synod, it was right that they should bear a part in the government of the diocese. To bring out how far the Jesuits were a corporate society whose members were mutually bound together by a common bond, Parlement was under the necessity of inquiring into the discipline and regulations of the Order; but, having carried out this investigation, it was also within its rights as custodian of the fundamental laws of the realm, to incriminate the principles of the Jesuits and declare them to be contrary to public order. Thus, on the civil proceedings, was superimposed a criminal charge, whose instigator was a clerical councillor, the Abbé Chauvelin. On April 6th, 1761, just as the High Court were about to hear the appeal from the Lionci and Gouffre verdict, the Abbé Chauvelin arose and in a brief harangue declared himself obliged, 'as a Christian, as a citizen, as a Frenchman, as a subject of the King and as a magistrate,' to draw the attention of his colleagues to the constitutions of the Order and the danger which he deemed he observed therein.' 'Is it not befitting therefore,' he went on, 'that an examination should be held into the constitution and regulations of the Society of Jesus? That, messieurs, is the question I beg to propose for your consideration.'

The Lionci and Gouffre affair was tried and decided with exceptional expedition. On May 8th the court delivered a verdict ordering the Jesuits, as a corporate body, to pay the amounts claimed, and awarded the claimant the sum of fifty thousand francs by way of damages, over and above the amount of the claim. It was not, however, till July 3rd that the Advocate-General, Joly de Fleury, was in a position to present his report on the *Constitutions*. The recital of this document took up four days. It traced, step by step, the whole history of the Society, examining its constitution in all its details, and called upon the Court to institute an inquiry, inasmuch as, according to him, the absolute authority exercised by the General of the Society over its members, was a danger to the State and to individual freedom. Chauvelin, in his turn, added to the records of the case a digest of the political works published by the Jesuit Fathers. The quotations which he had brought together, some of which were incorrectly translated, others mutilated or entirely false, were intended to show that the Jesuits had criticized the Holy Scriptures, taught a perverted system of morals, fomented sedition, and defended regicide. Chauvelin reminded his listeners of the assassination of Henry the Third and Henry the Fourth, of the attempt recently made on the life of the King of Portugal, and, finally,

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conveyed the insinuation that Damiens' crime was not wholly unconnected with the publication of a reprint of a pernicious work written by a certain German Jesuit.

On August 6th, the Parlement brought in a verdict ordering a number of works of Jesuit authorship to be committed to the flames, and requiring that their colleges should be closed as from October 1st following. The verdict, however, not only held good within the sphere of the Court's jurisdiction, but all the provincial Parlements save four took up the question of the *Constitutions* and condemned them, as the Paris Courts had done. A magistrate at Rennes achieved a reputation for himself by including in his indictment an argument to the effect that the vows by which the Jesuits were bound, violated the principles of the laws of nature, 'the model and exemplar of all laws whatsoever'. Without so much as calling on the defence, the Parlement of Provence ordered the property of the Society to be confiscated. One of the presidents having protested against so unusual a manner of administering justice, his colleagues sentenced him to perpetual banishment for daring to impeach the honour of the magistracy.

The outcry against the Jesuits was general throughout the country. The magistrates had seen to it that their decisions should receive the widest possible publicity, and a swarm of pamphleteers followed in their wake doing their utmost to stir up the indignation of the public. The mode of procedure was invariably to select, from the writings of old and forgotten authors, a number of ambiguous or compromising passages, of such a nature, that, being strung together in a certain sequence, they should suggest some sinister and hideous doctrine. Seeing the flood of literature which had poured from the members of the Society in the course of its history, there were naturally not a few grotesque absurdities to draw upon. The works of a certain Père Pomey were dug out from the libraries where, since 1650, they had been slowly gathering dust. Père Pomey was the author of a theological catechism in which he set out some queer details regarding the Joys of Paradise, of which the 'down with religion' party made enormous capital:

*Question:* What! the sense of hearing, smell, taste and touch will be gratified in the fullest measure?

*Answer:* Why yes, without a doubt. The sense of hearing will be charmed by dulcet sounds and harmonies; the sense of smell by sweet odours and perfumes; the taste by savoury flavours; and nothing will be lacking to delight the sense of touch and feeling.

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Very naïvely the Reverend Father carefully remarked that the delights to be enjoyed by the last-mentioned sense would be in strict accord with the laws of decency and good behaviour.

The Jesuits attempted to set up a defence. In their 'Reply' to the quotations from their works, they pointed out, among the passages alleged against them, seven hundred and fifty-eight misstatements and falsifications. But the Courts seized the works which told in their favour and prohibited the booksellers from exposing them for sale.

It was not without anxiety that the King took note of these fresh dissensions. The war of 1756 was coming to a disastrous termination. Canada had already gone. In India, all that remained to us was Mahe and Pondicherry. Frederick, though conquered, was by no means crushed. Russia was showing signs of deserting. But horrible as the tyrannical maxims of the Jesuit Marian and the Jesuit Buzenbaum may have been, those revered Fathers had long been dead. They were read by no one; their writings had been disavowed by the Society and, but for the Abbé Chauvelin, they would have been suffered to slumber on in undisturbed oblivion. Louis the Fifteenth was as anxious to settle this quarrel as he had been to settle the others. His first idea had been to prohibit the Parlement from concerning itself with the *Constitution*, and to refer the matter exclusively to his Council. But Choiseul and Lamoignon pointed out that, in view of the circumstances, it was necessary to avoid offending the magistrates. That being so, he would have at least desired, even if he had to sacrifice the Jesuits as a corporate association, to let them stay on in an individual capacity, as priests and confessors. He postponed closing their houses for six months and begged the Pope personally to remove from their rules and regulations whatever seemed to run counter to the laws of the realm. The Pope declined, the Parlements quietly got their own way about the dates fixed for the execution of their sentences, and, in the course of 1762, the Society's houses were evacuated, one after another, and put under sequestration. On August 6th, 1762, a supplementary verdict of the Paris Parlement prohibited the Jesuit Fathers from wearing the distinctive habit of their Order, and from keeping up any correspondence, direct or indirect, with their superiors. Furthermore, in terms of the same decree, the Fathers, novices and scholars who were resident in Jesuit houses in 1761, would be debarred henceforth from teaching, holding benefices, and from discharging any public office unless they had previously taken an oath of allegiance to the

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King, and sworn to defend the Gallican Church against the encroachments of Rome. And then, finally, in March, 1764, a crowning sentence condemned the Jesuits to banishment in perpetuity.

But this time the cup was full to overflowing. The King, asserting his sovereign rights, took things out of the hands of the Courts, and put an end to the affair by an edict dated November, 1764. 'It is our will and pleasure that, henceforth, the Society of the Jesuits shall have no status in our realm . . . we nevertheless permit those who were formerly members of the said Society to live as private individuals in our realm . . . conforming to the laws thereof and comporting themselves in all respects as our good and faithful subjects. It is further our will that any criminal proceedings which may have been set on foot against the Society of Jesus, shall henceforth be regarded as null and void.'

The Jesuits possessed some hundred or so first-rate schools up and down the country, the control of which was handed over to governing bodies composed of priests and magistrates. The question of educational reform gave rise to a controversy which has continued to this very day. The Encyclopaedists reproached the Jesuits for producing nothing but word-spinners and Latinists. There were endless squabbles about the educational value of the Classics, the practical utility of modern languages, the best method of teaching geography, and the space that ought to be given in the *curricula* to physics, history and mathematics. Three magistrates, La Charolais of Rennes, Guyton de Morveau of Dijon, Rolland d'Erceville of Paris, made names for themselves in the course of these controversies. They drew up a plan of education on modern lines which included German, English, Astronomy and Mechanics among the subjects to be taught. And the only result of it all was an almost general return to the old *curricula*, with few or no improvements.

This impregnable system handed on the literary tastes of the preceding age and consolidated respect for the great forms of poetic composition – lyric, tragic, epic, together with descriptive verse and the comedy of manners. To it may be ascribed the birth of all those Catos and Brutuses who, in years to come, crowded the benches of the Revolutionary Assemblies. But, besides all this, it helped to keep alive the classic spirit in its two essential attributes, its reverence for truth and its psychological insight. The art-forms which shed an undying lustre over the seventeenth century, were declining, or already exhausted; but in the novel and the short story, the classic spirit found new life, and still lives on.



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Between 1764 and 1767, the Jesuits were driven out of all the countries under Bourbon rule, in Europe, America and Asia. Expelled from France, Spain, Naples, Sicily, Parma, Peru, Paraguay, the Argentine, the Philippine Islands and Mexico, expelled also from Portugal and Brazil, the Fathers found a home in Prussia and Russia. As a matter of principle, the Pope was unwilling to receive them in Rome. Not knowing whither to send, or what to do with, his own particular Jesuits, the King of Spain pitched a whole cargo of them on to the shores of Corsica. A variety of pretexts were put forward to justify this wholesale banishment, but it was Choiseul that was at the bottom of it all. The game he was playing comes out clearly enough in the correspondence he was carrying on with the Marquis d'Ossun, our Ambassador at Madrid. In every dispatch, he may be seen secretly trying to stir up bad blood between the Spanish Court and the Society, while, in Paris, he excuses his anti-Jesuit policy on the grounds that it was wholly dictated by a desire to keep in with their Spanish allies. No sooner had Charles the Third put his signature to the decree of expulsion, than Choiseul managed to put into his head the desirability of bringing united pressure on the Pope to suppress the Order altogether. Every week he harped on the same theme. He impressed upon him that the Jesuits were, and would continue to be, the sworn foes of the Bourbons, and that if the Bourbons had not the moral courage nor the strength to crush them out of existence, situations of an inconvenient and highly perilous nature would be constantly cropping up. He succeeded in persuading Louis the Fifteenth that, to allow a society so obstinately resolved on vengeance to establish themselves at his very doors, so to speak, would be a very risky course to pursue. And so Louis the Fifteenth wrote a personal letter to his cousin urging him to join in the great work of annihilation.

The Court of Madrid was still sitting on the fence, when an indiscretion on the part of the Pope, Clement the Thirteenth, brought things to a head. Ferdinand, the Duke of Parma, nephew of Charles the Third, and Louis the Fifteenth's grandson, following in the footsteps of his kinsfolk, had sent the Jesuits packing, and taken various steps to curtail the special privileges of the clergy. On the ground that the Duchy of Parma was merely a detached portion of the dominion of Saint Peter, and, as such, subject to the supreme authority of the Church, Clement the Thirteenth excommunicated the Prince and his advisers (January, 1768). 'The reigning Pope is a complete imbecile' wrote Choiseul forthwith to Madrid, 'but his

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minister is a madman of the first water. The King has been gravely upset at this piece of outrageous insolence. It was pointed out to him, in the Council, that the object of the measure was purely temporal and that why the Roman Curia had not communicated with Madrid and Versailles and put forward its grievances, before launching its futile thunders, was utterly beyond comprehension. I told His Majesty, in my individual capacity, that if they permitted this odious measure on the part of Rome to pass without a protest, there was no knowing to what extremity a man like the Pope, who had clearly taken the bit between his teeth, might not eventually proceed. . . . I added that in this affair as in all others, it devolved on the Family Pact, to see that no prince of the House of Bourbon should suffer any insults however vain and harmless they might be considered.' Called upon to lift his ban of excommunication, the Pope refused to comply. Forthwith Louis the Fifteenth ordered Avignon to be occupied, while the Neapolitan forces took possession of Benevento and Ponte Corvo (April, 1768). A few months later, France and Spain sent the Holy Father a fresh ultimatum, in which both Kings made a formal demand for the 'total and irrevocable abolition of the Society and the secularization of all individuals composing it'. Death removed Clement the Thirteenth before he could reply, and the Conclave elected as his successor a Franciscan named Ganganeli, who did not love the Jesuits. Bernis had played an important part in the election. Coming to Rome as Cardinal, he stayed on as Ambassador. It was he who had to take steps for the final extinction of the Jesuits, a task which took him three more years of push and persuasion. At last, on July 21st, 1773, the Brief *Dominus ac Redemptor*, brought the Society of Jesus to an end.

Choiseul had soothed the Jansenist predilections of the Parlements by flinging them the Jesuits for a prey. But this had not been merely a device for prolonging his ministerial existence and postponing the day of great decisions.

Strong in the assurance that the Courts were on his side, Choiseul pursued an energetic and highly consistent policy. To turn the tables upon England, to wipe out the stain of the former defeat was his one deep-seated aim, and that aim he unwaveringly and unweariedly pursued. At first one is apt to be rather taken aback by the violence and lack of restraint that mark his diplomatic correspondence, but, once we get used to his somewhat slapdash style, it is impossible not to admire the clear-sightedness of his ideas, the weight of his argu-

ments and the precision, the force, the cogency with which he urged them. Early in 1761 Choiseul brought his cousin into the Council, the future Duc de Praslin, a steady-going, modest, hard-working man, devoted to duty and utterly regardless of his own interests. He, too, had once been Ambassador at Vienna. Between them they took charge of the War Office, the Navy and Foreign Affairs, exchanging an office, or taking on an additional one, as the circumstances of the moment might dictate.

The Family Pact and the Austrian Alliance were the instruments on which he relied to carry out his policy. In the last war, the one had been employed amiss, the other had come too late. But it was not the system's fault that it was badly carried out. Clearly grasped and properly carried through, it was the only sensible, the only workable plan; nay, the only possible one. The alliance would keep the troublesome elements on the continent within bounds, the pact would effectively check English colonial and maritime activities. Everything possible was done to consolidate the future coalition, and six marriages, following in quick succession, knit close the bonds between Hapsburg and Bourbon. The Emperor Joseph the Second married the Infanta Isabella, and the Prince of the Asturias the Infanta Louisa Maria Theresa, both daughters of Don Philip and granddaughters of Louis the Fifteenth. On the other side, a sister of the Prince of the Asturias married the Emperor's brother, the Archduke Leopold, Grand Duke of Tuscany. One Archduchess, Maria Amelia, became Duchess of Parma; another Carlotta Louisa, Queen of Naples; a third, Marie Antoinette, Dauphine of France. In such a world of cousins, sons and brothers-in-law, Louis the Fifteenth seemed like the grandfather of Europe. Furthermore, if it might reasonably be alleged that in 1763 France had sacrificed herself for the sake of her allies, Choiseul took good care to see to it that such a thing should not happen again. In Spain and in Naples particularly, he defended the privileges of our consuls and traders with a high hand. He succeeded – not without much trouble it is true – in maintaining our commercial ascendancy at Cadiz, nor did he omit, when occasion required, to impress on Charles the Third that the pact imposed greater obligations on Spain than merely acting as ballast with nothing to do but be thrown overboard. France herself set the example. With feverish energy she set about moulding anew her army and navy. The two Choiseuls gathered round them a little staff of officers and engineers, all of them meritorious and competent men, all of them smarting under the sense of

defeat, and all of them burning to retrieve it. Humiliated by disaster, the upper ranks resolved to pull themselves together. Party divisions were all subordinated to a single purpose, a unique desire. For the first and only time in her history, France applied herself with passionate determination to improving her maritime position and the enfeebled monarchy derived from this generous concourse of hates and hopes, a new source of strength which sometimes transformed Louis the Fifteenth from an elderly and disillusioned sceptic into a youthful knight at arms keeping a vigil inspired with soaring hopes of a glorious empire.

A similar spirit of emulation inspired the officers ashore and afloat. 'Work hard and win' might well have been the slogan appropriate to them all. The Map and Chart Office, the School of Ship-construction, the Brest Academy became hives of higher naval studies, whilst La Flèche and the École Militaire brought into being a new generation of men who took their calling seriously and worked hard to master it, a strange contrast to their predecessors, who thought the whole art of soldiering was summed up in throwing away lives, their own and other people's, in gallant but unprofitable sacrifice. The ink on the peace preliminaries was scarcely dry, when Choiseul commanded his subordinates to work out a plan for reconstituting the forces which was submitted to the King and examined by him in three successive Councils. The army had come out of the war in a deplorable state of disorganization. No two regiments were alike in make-up or equipment. They had been called into existence, as circumstances dictated, and there was no underlying system to give them any sort of unity one with another. Discipline was non-existent, the men were paid at irregular intervals, the fighting gear was worn out, the supplies were reduced to zero. But in 1762, a General Army order restored uniformity to the various units and required of all officers the strictest measure of obedience, and continual presence with the troops under their command. It was decreed that, in peace time, the various regiments should cease to be so many collections of loafers quartered on the civil population and subjected, for six months out of the twelve, to no more stringent control than that of a few half-fledged junior officers. In the various barracks there were now proper schools of instruction where the men were taught to carry out whatever commands their officers were taught to give them. Such as were prevented by age, indolence, ignorance or temperament from conforming to the new regulations, were put on half-pay, or ordered to send in their resignation. The

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Artillery founded a training camp at Compiègne, where troops came in successive drafts to be instructed in drill and tactical evolutions under, and for the benefit of, the generals whose lot it would one day be to command them in the field. There were route marches in the open country, evolutions in column and in line, attack and defence of fortified places, real firing practice, retirement and covering of troops, crossing rivers, or negotiating mountain passes. The King used to attend these manœuvres and watch the French army visibly taking shape beneath his eyes. Gribeauval, who was appointed Inspector General of Artillery, completely rearmed his forces, having special weapons adapted to different circumstances. There were light, mobile guns for the field, heavy artillery, garrison and coast artillery. It was in 1765 that his designs were first adopted; they remained in force until 1825. At the time of Louis the Fifteenth's death, there was no artillery and no infantry in Europe to compare with the French.

Nevertheless, since the war they were preparing for was a war with England, the Navy was necessarily the prime factor. The lesson learnt in 1763 had not been thrown away. Louis the Fifteenth and Choiseul had both come to realize that it was no use to possess colonies if you had no merchantmen to sail to and fro between them, and no ships of war to defend them against the foe. So, before annexing continents and islands, they made themselves strong at sea. In 1763, all we had by way of navy, was forty ships very much out of repair; by 1771, we were in a position to send into action sixty-four ships of the line and forty-five frigates. The Arsenal at Brest, Cherbourg, Rochefort and Toulon had plentiful stores of arms, sails and munitions. Wharfs and warehouses were built at Lorient, Marseilles and Bayonne; naval bases were constructed and equipped at San Domingo, Martinique and the Ile de France. The staff were reorganized and put on a new salary basis. It was the decree of the March 25th, 1756, which fixed the respective stipends of field and staff officers, harbour masters, intendants, commissaries, managers and naval engineers. Finally, in 1769, the Duc de Praslin created the royal marine corps of infantry and artillery which, together with the sailors of all ratings, formed the permanent reserve.

This immense task was completed by the acquisition of Corsica. There existed between the King and Genoa, the suzerain of the island, a treaty which still had a considerable time to run. The Corsicans had several times risen in revolt against their overlords and, since 1729, the Genoese forces of occupation had been reduced

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to a few miserable garrisons that were hard put to it to maintain themselves in some seven or eight petty townships along the coast. The mountainous districts of the interior had proclaimed their independence and sworn allegiance to various leaders, among whom was the great Paoli. In the Cardinal's day, a Westphalian baron had made his appearance there arrayed like a grand vizier. He had had himself proclaimed King, under the title of Theodore the First. But as his war-chest contained little more than a few bottles of Rhenish wine, his leading subjects had deposed him; after which he fled to Amsterdam, where his creditors had him flung into gaol. It has been thought astonishing that France did not encourage the insurgents to seek her aid and protection. It was, however, an express and universal principle of the Old Diplomacy that a title can never derive from a revolt; that rebels can never confer a right. From the fact that, for a whole century, France was content merely to prevent any rival power from establishing a dominion in Corsica, it would be erroneous to conclude that the island was a matter of indifference to her. From time immemorial, France had cast covetous eyes on Corsica, but she could not, and would not, take it over save by due and lawful transfer from the hands of its legitimate possessor. Choiseul's astuteness is revealed in his very refusal to have any direct dealings with Paoli, and in so managing matters as to get Genoa to offer, as the price of continued financial help from France, the sovereign rights which the Genoese Republic was no longer in a position to defend. So anxious was he that the transaction should present a perfectly legal appearance, that all mention of, or reference to, a sale was carefully excluded from the agreement of 1768. In principle, France was acting for, and on behalf of, the Genoese, and it was only in the event of the expenses she was about to incur not being repaid, that she would retain the island in her possession. In a word, the King was subduing the island on behalf of the Genoese Republic and was keeping it because the Republic would never be able to foot the bill. The task was already in part performed. For twenty years past, Genoa had been employing French battalions who were quartered in the barracks at Ajaccio, Calvi and Bastia. The captains ran up the new flag on the walls and, when the treaty was divulged, no power in this world, not even England, would have been in a position effectively to oppose the transfer.

As the country was sick of war and its attendant ills, and as the King 'from the depths of his paternal heart' was promising it 'pros-

perity, glory and well-being', Choiseul had jumped, a little prematurely, to the conclusion that the conquest would be a mere military parade. In point of fact, Paoli was only overcome with difficulty, after a hard-fought contest, which it took three months and twenty-five thousand men to bring to a successful issue. For the ensuing work of pacification, the credit must go to the Comte de Vaux, an officer belonging to a fine old aristocratic family. He was an intelligent man, austere, energetic and kind, and when he set his troops in motion, he saw to it that Justice marched along with them step by step. He won the country over by making submission easy for them. There have been epochs which seemed predestined to error; and, for the moment, the acquisition of Corsica appeared to contemporary eyes an event of no very great importance. King Theodore had been a King of Shreds and Patches, and it seemed a comical thing that Louis the Fifteenth should succeed so preposterous a personage. 'The public did not realize the value of this conquest,' wrote the Duc de Praslin. 'By calling itself a kingdom, Corsica had made itself look a trifle ridiculous; and that was quite enough to belittle it in the public estimation. Looked at, however, from the military and political point of view, a possession which protects the coast of Provence, furnishes some first-rate harbours and facilitates the passage to Italy, is of the most incontestable importance.' At all events, two years later, a French engineer named Vallière was given the task of putting the Neapolitan forts and Sicily into a satisfactory state of defence.

Whatever Choiseul touched seemed to prosper. His repeated successes had taken all the wind out of his enemies' sails. Every time he had scented a plot, he had tendered his resignation, and, every time the King had pressed him, with the warmest expressions of gratitude and affection, to remain. But all these outwardly auspicious appearances were deceptive. Though he made it seem that all was going on swimmingly, the Duke had, in reality, brought about a state of affairs which, though he himself might affect to ignore it, could scarcely escape the notice of the King, who was less impulsive and better informed than his minister. His initial error had been to leave Eastern Europe out of his calculations. With a view to war with England and to the maintenance of peace in Europe, he had quite properly taken measures to play off Prussia against Austria, but he had entirely omitted to reckon with Russia. On the far side of the Oder, French policy seemed to have fallen into a state of inertia. Nevertheless, Russia had played an important part

during the Seven Years' War. She had brought us within an ace of victory, and then, by her defection, she had set the seal on our defeat. The friendship which had united Peter the Third and Frederick in such powerful bonds, had not been broken by Catherine. On the contrary, from the Baltic to the Black Sea, the Empress, with Prussia at her back, was pursuing a daring line of policy which, since it constituted a menace to Poland as well as to Turkey, could scarcely leave Austria in the position of an unconcerned spectator. There was a risk that there might be a repetition in the East of that formidable diversion which, at the critical moment, would once more monopolize all the energies of our ally and compel us to come to the rescue by bringing up our forces to the Rhine or to the Elbe. Louis the Fifteenth was fully alive to the danger. He felt that if the growth of Prussia had not been advantageous to France, the sudden incursion of Russia would complete the destruction of the equilibrium which it had cost such a deal of trouble to restore. Russia, that vast and shadowy land, filled him with forebodings. He would have liked the Empire of the Tsars to remain an Asiatic power, or at least that it should be permanently confined within its present limits.

'You are already aware,' he wrote in 1762, 'and what I have previously said I now repeat in the clearest possible manner, that the object of my Russian policy is as far as possible to prevent Russia from mixing herself up with European affairs.' In the view of the King, Prussia and Russia would inevitably join hands against Poland with a view to its dismemberment, but the disappearance of that 'Royal Republic' as he called it would also involve the destruction of our credit in the East. 'I want the Poles to be a free people,' he said. At five hundred leagues distance, these benevolent sentiments of Louis the Fifteenth lost something of their effectiveness. Poland had had no worse enemy than herself; and she was succumbing to the disintegrating effects of a Gothic constitution which robbed her of all power, made civil war the mainspring of government, handed over the state to rival parties and those parties themselves to the foreigners. 'What this country lacks,' wrote one of our own ambassadors, 'is people, police and a government. The defects of its administration are such as to rob it of all vigour. The sovereign authority resides neither in the person of the monarch, not in any section of the governing machine, but solely in the collective wishes of the nation; in other words it resides nowhere at all. This Kingdom has no laws and no government; it is not a republic, it is not a



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monarchy; it combines the vices of despotic rule with those of no rule at all, and a military, financial and commercial organization are alike denied it. . . . It is therefore plain that in its present condition, and looked at as a power, Poland's influence may be regarded as completely non-existent.' For all these ills, there was but one remedy, viz.: such a re-arrangement of the government machine as would restore its power to the Kingdom, and the support of some outside power who would have an interest in maintaining its independence and integrity. It was some such idea as that which appealed to Louis the Fifteenth. Since the Poles would have to work out their own salvation, he would give the national party assistance in the shape of money and advice and, if need should arise, suggest a French prince to fill the elective throne of Warsaw.

It was this policy that came to be known as *le secret du Roi*, the King's secret. It is matter for surprise that in order to bring it to a successful issue, Louis the Fifteenth should have corresponded with certain of our Ambassadors unbeknown to his ministers, and sometimes in terms that ran counter to their instructions. Why could he not have declared his wishes freely and frankly to his Council? Great as was the timidity of the King, some other explanation of the phenomenon seems to be called for. It must not be overlooked that he was well aware how imperfect and inadequate was the quality of the service and obedience rendered him. Doubtless, his ministers did not openly resist him. Nevertheless, when they felt that they had public opinion on their side, their obedience to his instructions was far from perfect in every detail. The 'Secret' was born into the diplomatic world in the high and palmy days of the Marquis d'Argenson, whose anti-Polish prejudices knew no bounds. What happened when the project for the revision of the traditional alliances was mooted, showed quite clearly that, even in the case of the worthiest, it was impossible to uproot some of the prejudices inherited from a former age. For ten years the *rapprochement* with Austria was secretly opposed by a section of those who should have given it their whole-hearted support. The same sort of thing would have happened with the pro-Polish policy and, as the French envoy in Warsaw was bound to be mixed up with all manner of party rivalries, the slightest false step might have ruined everything.

The King's correspondence with Warsaw, Stockholm, St. Petersburg and Constantinople was directed, to begin with, by the Prince de Conti, a possible candidate for kingly honours, and, subsequently, by the Comte de Broglie, a former Ambassador at Warsaw,

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and by Tercier, senior Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs. The main object of the 'Secret' was always the maintenance of Polish independence, but Louis the Fifteenth also made use of this cabinet-within-a-cabinet to collect and codify information regarding foreign powers in general, and, in particular, he directed his private general-staff to examine and report on a plan for the invasion of England, which, apparently, was very skilfully conceived.

The 'Secret' should have had the effect of stimulating ministerial action wherever it was inclined to slumber; but in point of fact its influence has often been exaggerated. The Comte de Saint-Priest, who was initiated into its deliberations after his appointment to the Embassy at Constantinople has bluntly stated in his reminiscences that it was ridiculously slack in its operations and a talking-shop of no account. We admit that Saint-Priest minimizes the importance of the King's individual excursions into the realm of diplomacy; but it would be to err egregiously in the opposite direction to look on them as giving the clue to the political activities of the whole reign. The Comte de Broglie was no Prime Minister in disguise, nor was the modest Tercier a Richelieu unrecognized by his generation. Often enough, indeed, Louis the Fifteenth invested his subordinate agents with duties that bore a strong resemblance to the operations commonly entrusted to policemen. Thus, one of the tasks of the Chevalier d'Eon in England consisted in running to earth, in booksellers' shops, the pamphlets which were produced in large numbers reviling, in the language of the gutter, the King of France and his mistresses. Under this heading we might relate not a few unsavoury stories with blackmail for their theme, none of which have the smallest connection with higher politics. For the rest, however unusual the King's conduct in these matters may have been, it was inspired by a very accurate sense of reality, and it might have been productive of very salutary results if, in order to breathe the spirit of life into the Polish National Party, Louis had been able to dispose of funds more ample than the meagre resources he derived from his privy purse or from his winnings at the card-table. As a general rule he was able to supply Tercier with coupons that had just fallen due. On one occasion, 45, representing 900 livres; on another, 31, representing 744 francs; and it was something in the nature of a wind-fall when he had a lottery ticket that brought in a hundred crowns. It took him two months of rigid economy to scrape together six thousand livres. Even then he added, 'Times are bad. I can't guarantee you any more for the present.' Once he promised thirty thousand livres within

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the fortnight, but that piece of extravagance was not repeated.

Reduced, practically, to depending on their own resources, the Polish patriots were compelled to endure every conceivable mortification; the election to the throne of a creature of Catherine the Second, the humiliation of the Diet, the tyrannical insolence of the Muscovite ambassador, the comings and goings of Russian troops, the kidnapping of the Bishop of Cracow, and, as a crowning disaster, the occupation of their capital by Prince Repnin. Driven to extremities, they called on the people to make a stand, and a Confederation was formed at Bar in Podolia for the defence of Faith and Freedom. Forthwith, in virtue of a secret agreement entered into between Catherine the Second and Frederick, a Prussian army came marching into the Kingdom, on the pretext of restoring order. With none but obscure and penniless leaders to direct it, the Confederation was doomed to failure. Louis the Fifteenth and Broglie were, neither of them, sanguine of any good results from it. Choiseul alone betrayed a disposition to support it. Unmasking the Russian ambitions in all their enormity, trusting in his own star, and having a gift for disconcerting the enemy by hastily improvising unexpected tactics, he effected his change of front with remarkable promptitude. 'Yesterday when there yet seemed left a grain of hope, he resolved to sit still; on the morrow, when all was lost, he determined to put everything to the hazard. The assistance which he had refused to render to a properly constituted government still in possession of some powers of self-defence, the interest which he had never taken in the Dauphine's own father and brother, he lavished on the leaders of an insurrection which, generous as were its motives, only marked the dying agony of a ruined cause.'

Perceiving the weakness of his protégés' resources, Choiseul had recourse to the time-honoured expedient of a diversion in the Near East: he fomented the war-fever among the Turks, whom Catherine's rapacity had already filled with anxiety on their own account. An insignificant violation of Turkish territory by some Russian troops supplied the pretext for a sudden declaration of war. For a moment Catherine's brow was clouded, but as soon as the first shock of surprise was over, she realized that the Turks were incapable of any immediately effective action. They took six months to get ready, and, long before they were able to set their military forces in motion, the Polish Confederation of Patriots had been crushed out of existence. Louis the Fifteenth possessed a curious faculty of, as it were, getting outside himself, and contemplating himself and his affairs

with the most absolute detachment, all without betraying the slightest emotion whether at victory or defeat, and without the orderly process of his reasoning being in the smallest degree disturbed. Whilst Choiseul was raising fire and fury to incite the Sultan to action, falling in the end a victim to his own blind enthusiasm, Louis the Fifteenth was writing to one of his informers with a coolness and a perspicacity that were alike imperturbable. 'The Turks are to decide the fate of Poland, but I rather think she will go under whatever happens.' As it turned out, His Turkish Majesty was everywhere defeated, his fleet burnt to the water's edge and his armies put to flight. If the Russian generals had been a little less incompetent, they would have pushed boldly on along the Danube and encountered no obstacle till they came to Adrianople. Incomplete as it was, their victory sufficed for the matter in hand. To fill the cup of disaster, Austria so as not to be a mere looker on at the dismemberment of Poland, hastily patched up an *entente* with Prussia, till then her foe and ours. Choiseul had greatly desired to have revenge on England, but he had made the mistake of limiting his attention too much to one spot. Because they were unforeseen, the complications in the East played havoc with half his plans; because it was but fragmentary, his policy dissipated itself in a series of measures that bore no fruit. Nor could we any longer count upon Austria. The agreement between the three continental powers was being effected without us, and almost in our teeth. We were fated to look on in silence at the final humiliation of our oldest allies.

But Choiseul had been guilty of a still graver error. Though he had invited war, though war was his policy, he had not put his country in a position to sustain it. No doubt he had re-established the army and the navy on a satisfactory footing, but victory requires other conditions besides those, and some of the most essential were simultaneously lacking, namely money, moral force, the union of hearts, and leadership. He had thought to placate the Parlements by delivering the Jesuits into their hands, but it quickly became apparent that he had reckoned without his host. The Parlements had abated nothing of their pretensions. Indeed the contrary was the case. Success had but added fuel to their ambitions and they had taken up a stand of open revolt against the King.

This rebellion of the magistracy is, without question, the outstanding political feature of the reign. It would be a great error to look on it merely as a manifestation of insubordination or anarchy. It represented the violent effort of the new privileged class to possess

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themselves of the ruling power and to change the character of the constitution by limiting the prerogatives of the Crown. Before it was overthrown by the many, the monarchy very nearly succumbed to the few; and it was the feudal, the aristocratic revolution, that paved the way for its proletarian successor.

At the time when this *Fronde* began its activities, France had thirteen courts of Appeal, or Parlements, four Higher Councils possessing the same powers in the provinces recently added (Corsica included) four *Cours des Aides* which decided claims brought by the taxpayer against the Revenue, and, conversely, inflicted punishment on taxpayers found guilty of fraudulent evasion, twelve *Chambres des Comptes*, or accountancy departments whose duty it was to supervise the Treasury agents. The Paris Parlement possessed a kind of pre-eminence over all the other Courts, not only because its sphere of influence extended over a third of the whole country, but also because the Princes of the Blood and the Peers took part in its deliberations. But, under the old regime, administrative and judicial prerogatives were almost always united in the same hands. For example the accountancy courts were not satisfied with merely checking the books of the collectors of taxes, but punished with fine and imprisonment any agents convicted of error or embezzlement. We have seen that Royal decrees required to be registered by the Courts and that, on such occasions, the magistrates had the right of presenting remonstrances, and that they often refused to register save in the King's presence, or by his express order. As contrasted with the Council, which embodies what was the King's pleasure for the time being, the Parlements claimed to be the permanent custodians of the fundamental laws of the country. They proclaimed them when they were made, and referred back to them when they were overlooked. Strong in the possession of this conservative power, they claimed the right to keep an eye on the executive government, police, public worship, trading and professional guilds, poor relief, supplies, roads, education and taxation. For the rest, no one could enter upon the duties of a public office until his appointment had been registered by one of the Courts. To name a special case, the various guilds of arts and crafts could not appoint a 'Master' unless and until he had presented his credentials to the judges, and been duly sworn in by them. The mason, the tinker, the baker, the inn-keeper, and the cookshop-man could not set up, or open shop, or carry on their trade, or calling, until they had obtained a legal permit or licence from the authorities. This, no doubt, was a mere

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matter of form, but a form that might turn into something considerably more constraining if the day should ever come when the magistrates might find it convenient to mobilize their clients.

The membership of the Sovereign Courts amounted to three thousand or thereabouts, but they controlled and dragged along in their train the magistrates of the lower Courts, finance departments, the Châtelet, presidial courts, bailiwicks, election offices, provostships and all the countless small-fry of the law, pleaders, proctors, ushers, registrars, bailiffs, notaries, beadles, clerks and articulated pupils. Lawyers with practices of their own could sell or dispose of them by will. They were like little dynasties, in whom the hereditary right of administering the law was vested in perpetuity. The d'Ormessons, the Joly de Fleury, the Lamoignons, the Molés, the Lepelletiers, the Pasquiers, the d'Aligres are among the great names of France. Nevertheless the magistrates derived their influence and the consideration they enjoyed, not merely from their official position but still more from the wealth which they possessed. The fact of the matter was they did not grow rich by dispensing justice. It was because they were rich that they could afford to be judges. A post which was worth 100,000 livres in Paris and 70,000 in the country, did not even bring in the interest on the capital. At Rennes, for example, salary, refreshers and emoluments hardly came to more than two or three thousand livres a year. By far the greater number of the magistrates were big landed-proprietors. President d'Aligre had a rent-roll amounting to seven hundred thousand livres. At Bordeaux, President de Ségur owned the finest vineyards in the Gironde. President Hénault left behind him an estate worth three millions; Counsellor Cochet of Saint Vallier, two millions. The magistrates of Rennes, Dijon, Besançon, Grenoble owned farms, forests, grazing-lands, preserves, and country mansions. Contrary to a widespread idea, their wealth did not consist wholly of real property. They married into the big financial houses, had interests in industrial concerns, and invested money in iron foundries and shipping concerns.

In 1704, Louis the Fourteenth admitted the magistrates of the High Courts to the ranks of the titled nobility, with power to their heirs to succeed thereto. Going one better than the King, several Parlements would only admit as members those who could display their titles of nobility. This transformation, which passed almost unnoticed, is of the utmost importance. As long as they belonged to the *bourgeoisie* or had only recently been promoted therefrom, the

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magistrates were the born foes of the nobles. How often have we not read accounts of austere lawyers rescuing the Kingdom from the hands of the barons, overthrowing feudal jurisdiction, demolishing feudal strongholds, hurling down the mighty from their seat, and securing the triumph of the King's justice, because the King meant unity, the Law, the Nation, the State! But now, in the eighteenth century, behold lawyers who have themselves become great lords! They buy up estates and have their retainers. In Franche Comté, the only province in which serfdom still survived, property held in chancery was vested either in the clergy or in the magistrates of Besançon. The fusion between the nobility of the sword and the nobility of the robe became complete; kinsfolk, mode of life, inter-marriage – all tended to break down the barriers and to make them one and the same. At the beginning of the century it was still regarded as a subject for mirth when President Dodun went about playing the Marquis on the strength of an estate that he had purchased. Forty years later, the circumstance would have excited no comment. Letters and memoirs of the time reveal that the two aristocracies mingled, on absolutely equal terms, in the *salons* and at all social festivities. The dandy of the law was just as eager to lay aside his cap and bands as was the dandy of the sword – cavalryman or musketeer – to divest himself of his uniform. They share the same tastes, they have kinsfolk in common, they both own mistresses and horses, and keep up expensive town-houses. And, most important of all, they have the same likes and dislikes. In a word, they who once had served the King had now gone over to his enemies.

A serious effort was made in the times of Louis the Fifteenth and Louis the Sixteenth, to rehabilitate the feudal regime. For a whole century past, whether from negligence or apathy, a great many of the nobility had suffered a good few of their rights to fall into desuetude, and a great many more forbore to insist on any rigorous interpretation of them. Moreover the whole question was one that invited disputes and litigation: the obscurity of ancient customs, the vagueness of the terms, the absence of original title-deeds, the difficulty of discovering equivalents for obsolete measures, the legality of commutations and redemptions. But realizing that they were not now in possession of the documents necessary for the establishment of their claims, and that, at a time when those claims were more and more liable to be called in question, some members of the landed classes took it into their heads to try and resuscitate their ancient claims and employed special lawyers – *feudistes* they were

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called – to whom they arranged to pay a percentage on the amounts recovered. The peasants stood out, and refused to pay; the nobles then took the matter to the courts and there, contrary to what had formerly been the rule, they generally obtained a favourable verdict. Thus old manorial dues and chief-rents were revived, and obsolete customs were rescued from the oblivion in which they had so long lain buried. Whole portions of the Middle Ages were thus restored to life by the verdict of the Courts of Justice.

The inauguration of the various Councils under the Regency was not the last effort of the nobility to get the reins of government into their own hands. The feudal spirit continued to exist for a long time after that, and finding a spokesman for itself in the higher ranks of the magistracy, became more dictatorial in its tone. In the palmiest days of Louis the Fifteenth, while old aristocratic manifestoes, dating from the *Fronde*, were being reprinted with scarce a sentence altered and made to do duty again in the remonstrances of the Parlements, there appeared two great books, both of them directly connected by ties of kinship with the works of Fénelon, Saint-Simon and the Abbé de Saint-Pierre. These were, the *Essai sur la noblesses* by Boulainvilliers, which was published in 1732, and the *Esprit des Lois* by Montesquieu, which saw the light in 1748. The worst error that an historian of the age of Louis the Fifteenth could commit, would be to suppose that the intellectual ideas of the century were all evolved uninterruptedly and in the same direction, to hold that each successive writer took up the criticism of absolute monarchy at the exact place at which his predecessor left off, Voltaire being more radical than Montesquieu, and Rousseau more radical than Voltaire. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Considered in relation to their times, Boulainvilliers and Montesquieu were, like Fénelon, reactionaries.

Boulainvilliers holds, not only that France is divided into classes, but that these classes are radically distinct, that the nobility are descended from the Frankish conquerors, and the Third Estate from the Gaulish serfs; that, in consequence, the nobles possess the land by right of conquest, that, in the early days, the monarchy was elective and limited, that the Kings were obliged to summon their vassals together in council and to defer to their advice, and, finally, that if in subsequent times the Kings encroached upon the prerogatives of the nobles, such encroachment was a usurpation and could not be defended. With an assumed air of detachment, Montesquieu sustains the most important of these theses against the Abbé Dubos.



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In his eyes, 'the Gothic' that is to say, the feudal 'form of government is the best that man had hitherto been able to conceive.' He laments the decay of baronial courts of justice, insinuates that to make the nobility liable to taxation was an act of despotism, and looks for the revival of the old-time courts, which he refers to as mediatorial bodies. But, above all, he claims that the nobility should have a larger share in the Government. 'The nobility,' he says, 'is part and parcel of the Monarchy. No King, no nobles; no nobles, no King. . . . The monarchical form of government presupposes a hierarchy, various ranks and grades, and even an original nobility.'

He invented the theory of the balance of power. The English, whom he compliments on the matter, had never thought of any save the legislative and executive. Himself belonging to the legal nobility and a *président à mortier*, he added a third division, the judiciary and placed it in charge of a purely imaginary constitution. The *Esprit des Lois* continued, until 1789, to be the Bible of the reactionary opposition. Few are the remonstrances that do not derive their inspiration from it. But the doctrine at which Montesquieu had hinted, the Courts henceforth affirmed with forceful emphasis, bolstering it up with an imposing array of erudite quotations. A Jansenist barrister, Le Paige by name, made it his life's work to supply the Parliamentary party with the arguments they required to substantiate their claims. His *Lettres historiques* were the source from which, for twenty years, the magistrates went for arguments wherewith to confound their adversaries. When the battle was at its hottest, Le Paige played the part of a Chief-of-Staff, co-ordinating the movements of the different army-corps, holding back these, urging on those, encouraging the waverers and bearing ammunition to such as had run short of it. And besides him, from 1764 to 1770, a kind of council of war used to be held at the house of an official of the Paris Parlement, one Michau de Monthlin, round whose table there used to foregather from time to time, a score or so of magistrates deeply versed in public jurisprudence. They had parcelled out the history of France among themselves, and what they wanted to show was that the monarchy, as originally established, had been tampered with by the Kings, and that a return ought to be made to primitive customs. In point of fact, all these learned investigations were nothing but midsummer madness. In their presentations of the case, the Franks, Charles the Bold, Childebert, Robert the Pious, were all mingled together, pell-mell. But in default of authentic documents, they based their arguments on doubtful conjectures,

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flimsy hypotheses, erroneous glosses, far-fetched etymologies, and mistaken verbal identities. Their remonstrances followed in endless succession, copied one from another. Disengaged from the high-sounding pedantry with which it was embellished, the thesis that was so earnestly canvassed by these learned gentlemen, is seen to be wholly arbitrary sophistical and ridiculous. Here it is in all its nudity:

Prior to the subjugation of the Gauls, the Frankish Kings had always governed with the aid of their people. Clovis and his successors maintained that primordial pact; and Hincmar informs us as to the order, form and authority of those assemblies, which were known by the name of *Placita* or *Parliaments*. When the members became too numerous, the whole nation was no longer admitted indiscriminately, but only the more important among them, who were chosen to represent the people as a whole and to speak in their behalf. The changes which the *Cour du Roi*, or King's Court subsequently introduced into its composition, in no way modified or curtailed these rights. The tribunal called into being in 1302 by Philippe le Bel, continued to remain the real Court of Peers, whence it results that the Parlement of Louis the Fifteenth inherited the prerogatives recognized by the Merovingian Kings as vested in the people: it is the centre, the tribunal and the organ of the nation, the guardian and the repository of its liberties; it is the judge between the King and his subjects; it has the right to discuss, modify and reject fresh laws; it is an integral part of the commonwealth, multiple yet one, and all its parts form but a single whole; the Parlements established in the provinces are detached members of the same individual and indispensable council. In each and all, the Parlement is the plenary, universal, capital, metropolitan and sovereign Court of France, without whose approval the King cannot levy a tax, impose a decree, or make an appointment. As ancient as the monarchy, owing its existence to no one, the Parlement keeps watch over all things that concern the building up and maintenance of the laws, the health, the harmony and the prosperity of the realm.

These words and phrases are copied directly from the remonstrances. But we must not be led astray by the radical tone of the wording. The regime which would take upon itself to restore the Parlements, was not itself representative. The magistrates were not elected, nor armed with a mandate, nor entrusted with a mission. They purchased their positions with good hard cash, and it was to the crown-pieces of their fathers before them that they owed their legal status. It was all very well for them to compare themselves to

the henchmen of Clovis, and to use high-sounding phrases about freedom, they were but the tools of the aristocratic opposition. They represented the resistance offered by the privileged classes to every measure of reform; their real aim was the dismemberment of the State for the benefit of the landowning classes, in whose ranks they had now found a place. This is so true that, according to them, even the King and the States General combined, had no power to make laws. In 1787, and again in 1788, they will be found maintaining that a tax agreed upon by the States General must be ratified by the Courts and be subject to their surveillance; and that a law adopted by the States General must be examined, debated and registered, with or without amendment, by the Parlements, in whom alone resides the power to put it into force.

In the year 1757, the Breton Parlement openly proclaimed that its functions did not consist in judging cases between individuals, but in exercising a sovereign control over property and persons in general. Unfortunately, while thus exalting their aims and ambitions, the Courts took but little trouble to make themselves worthy to fulfil them. It is the chief advantage of a judicial system whose offices are purchasable with money, that it secures an independence in the administration of justice that no other system can supply in equal measure. But whilst the judges were thus transforming themselves into party-leaders, the moral and intellectual level of the tribunals had suffered a serious decline. In former days a high standard of juridical knowledge had been demanded of all candidates for the judicial bench. Those times had gone by, and people were not so particular. The examinations were, in fact, nothing more nor less than a farce. If, in Paris, the High Court was still composed of magistrates of riper years, of grave men who took their calling seriously and had a thorough knowledge of the law, ignorance and incompetence prevailed elsewhere. At Rennes, from half to two-thirds of the judges never set foot in the Court at all. Litigation would drag on for months, sometimes for years, because, when a case came up for hearing, it was discovered that the counsel for the prosecution had started for a holiday, or had gone off to his place in the country. A Royal Commission which had been set up to take the place of a Parlement that had gone on strike, found 235 accused men in prison, every one of them in irons: the judges had not had time to give them their attention. Of the partisan nature of the Parlements there can be no doubt; they were solid to a man for the nobles against the people. They were in fact, nothing more nor less

than aristocratic assemblies, hand-in-glove with the privileged classes. A peasant that brought a case against his landlord, was non-suited in advance; a plaintiff who, whatever the proceedings, had not displayed sufficient enthusiasm for the good cause, was foredoomed to failure. This revolting pressure was even exercised on their colleagues by members of the same court. A member of the Rennes Parlement who, in 1765, had gone on with his duties when his colleagues on the bench refused to act, had the misfortune to come up before them as plaintiff. He lost his case and his independence cost him 200,000 francs, a fortune. Moreover with these Parlement men, dog would eat dog; they would devour one another. At the least sign of friction they would up and call one another swindlers, forgers, blackguards, paid informers, disturbers of the peace.

From 1758 to 1770, between them and the ministers, the intendants and the commandants of the provinces, it was war to the knife, paralysing the Government, holding up public works, hindering the collection of taxes, overthrowing the Controllers-General, preventing the King from carrying on the war, and sowing terror and disaster on every side. Not a single section of the Government escaped their censure, but whenever they were rash enough to point to some definite fact to illustrate their complaints, it was seen how grossly they had distorted the truth.

As a general rule, however, the Courts refrained from giving chapter and verse. Whatever the matter in question, public works, *vingtièmes*, roads, a tax on luxuries, a tax on carriages, disciplinary enactments, the harvest, the rain, or the fine weather, the remonstrances were turned out in advance by paid pamphleteers who knew how to serve up the sort of thing to excite the feelings of the public. In 1762, President de Brosses, a lewd old rake disguised as Cato, tried his blandishments on Jean Jacques Rousseau. 'The Parlement of Dijon is occupied with public matters of the highest importance and wishes to secure, for the purposes of drafting its remonstrances and memoranda, the services of a celebrated writer who, at the same time, must be worthy of the confidence reposed in him. All material and instructions will be given to him ready for use, and in detail, so that all that will be required is the literary skill necessary to put the material together and to present it effectively. The Magistrates are possessed of dignity, courage, and a profound acquaintance with public law and the monarchical constitution. Eloquence, however, is a gift of which few can boast. . . . I have been applied to with a view to selecting from the ranks of our men of letters, a writer whose

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identity will be known to no one but myself. I do not hesitate to offer you the post. Rest assured of the most inviolable secrecy so far as I am concerned.'

But Jean Jacques declined. However, there still remained the inexhaustible arsenal of blood-and-thunder bombast. *Violation of the public trust, ruinous burden of taxation, profound anxiety, the vast sea of difficulties, the wickedness of the tax-farmers, criminal luxury, why the people are robbed, the abuse of despotic power.* Here are a few quotations selected at random. 'Agriculture is dying, manufactures are at a standstill . . . the farmer is at his last gasp and can scarcely get a bare living from the soil that he tills. In the despair which torments him, he is tempted to sling behind him the tools he works with as the source of his misfortunes. . . . Morals seem to be suffering a corresponding decline. Human kindness, that touching virtue whose seeds are in the heart, that virtue which is born with us, and which we can neither create nor acquire . . . that virtue which . . . that virtue—' and so on, and so on (Rouen, 1760). 'How moving should be the picture of these unhappy labours. Your heart, Sire, would be filled with equal indignation and compassion. Work ordered to be carried out without consideration, inroads made on funds that might be better employed, trees uprooted, gardens laid waste, houses demolished, etc.' (Toulouse, 1756).

And here's another splendid outburst, 'Come forth a while, come forth, Sire, from the precincts of that sumptuous palace which surrounds your own, and seems fain to vie with it in its display of grandeur and royal magnificence. Come forth from among that throng of brilliant courtiers, of wealthy citizens, of men who have grown rich in a day upon the spoils of France. A capital which is becoming a monstrous thing, an empire that will soon be as a desert, a vast city where gold and silver flow in in rivers from the provinces! What a picture! What a contrast!' (Montauban, 1756). 'It was the duty, Sire, of your Parlement, to set before a King who is the father of his subjects, the woeful plight of a downtrodden people. . . . They will tell you that no one makes any complaint. . . . But private individuals cannot say their say, their voice has been smothered by fear. There is but one free body still extant, etc.' (Rennes, 1764). 'The Court cannot make up its mind to acquiesce in the nation's ruin, nor to stand by and see that ruin consummated by the subversion of the law and the triumph of the oppressors of the people. . . .' (Rouen, 1763). 'A new foe has appeared in the heart of the monarchy, to rend it asunder; a thousand times more cruel than war,

the personal despotism of the Commandant in the provinces of your realm has at length dared to show itself unmasked; on the sacred ark that enshrines the law, it lays a brutal hand' (Rennes, 1764). *In the keeping of the laws lies a Kingdom's strength. . . . The feeling of bitterness and sorrow, the maintenance of justice, humanity . . . honour . . . obedience . . . zeal . . . voice of truth*, always the same words, and windy phrases, the same ambitions masquerading as zeal for the downtrodden, the same lies, the same incitement to revolt.

If the war was to be carried on, there must be more and higher taxes. The Courts refused to register the increase. It was one interminable round of protests, strikes, beds of justice, quashed verdicts, resignations, exiles and scandals. Troops are called out; streets closed; law-courts guarded; armed escorts for intendants and governors. What was Choiseul doing to put down this unrest which threatened the very existence of the Monarchy? Nothing; or next to nothing. He temporised, he drew back, he gave way. The men best fitted to defend the royal authority, he threw over. Fitz-James at Toulouse, d'Harcourt at Rouen, Dumesnil at Grenoble, Bourgeois de Boynes at Besançon, were all either ham-strung or tossed to the wolves. Finally, he made a gigantic surrender. He gave up the Controller-Generalship, the most important post in the Government to a Parlement man, one Laverdy.

The magistrates were winning all along the line, but the use they made of their success showed what a crowd of vainglorious nonentities they were. Laverdy, poor man, thought he saw Jesuits everywhere. Some of his blunders became legendary. One evening, at a dinner he shouted across the table to a waiter, 'Here, give me some brains. I need them badly enough, seeing the job I've got.' Terribly flustered, buried deep in his files, flitting about from one pile of documents to another, saying what an ignorant ass he was, but telling everyone how well he meant, always prating about dying in harness, such was Laverdy. But he impressed no one, not even his former colleagues, in whom he was amazed to discover so much malice and to whom his replies took the form of very half-hearted objurgations or tearful supplications. 'His five years of office (December, 1763, to September, 1768) can only be regarded as a veritable catastrophe. The intendants dared not do a thing, the taxes were only got in after incredible delays, the King's authority was flouted, citizens who had any regard for the public weal lay low and said nothing. Last, but not least, the presence of one Parlement man on the Council, fired the ambitions of all the others.'

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There was at Rennes a Procurator-General of the name of Louis René de Caradeuc de la Chalotais. He was an irascible, vindictive sort of man, in debt up to his eyes and bursting with literary pretensions. A little booklet on freedom of trade in grain, and a memorandum concerning on the subject of marriage licences had not availed to rescue him from obscurity, and it was only his attacks on the Jesuits that made him look like a man of some weight in the political world, and a party leader. In order that he might come to Paris and mix with people of influence there, but without losing his control over the Rennes Parlement, he had got leave for his son, an epileptic of weak intellect, to act as his *locum tenens*. The Duc d'Aiguillon, the Commandant of the Province, had rightly opposed the granting of this favour; but seeing that, ever since 1753, d'Aiguillon had been waging against the States General the usual fiscal war, with its inevitable concomitants of tumults and recriminations, La Chalotais flung the Parlement into the *mêlée* with a violence and an unscrupulousness which were remarkable even for those times.

The King had been receiving some anonymous letters of an insulting character. They were submitted to experts who thought they recognized the handwriting of La Chalotais. Another incident – the arbitrary condemnation of the officer commanding the citizen militia of Rennes, brought Louis the Fifteenth to the end of his patience, plentifully as he was endowed with it. While the Duc d'Aiguillon was away on leave, La Chalotais was arrested, together with his son and four other Councillors. The papers found in his house established beyond all doubt that he was in the habit of giving expression to sentiments of hatred and contempt of the royal authority, that he was carrying on a clandestine correspondence with various persons who were subverters of public order, that he had sent to various destinations anonymous letters of an insulting character, and, finally, that he was guilty of various manoeuvres undertaken with the object of stirring up sedition. But nowhere could judges be found to condemn him. The Rennes Parlement resigned in a body and suspended the course of justice. In virtue of the theory of 'the Parlement one and indivisible', to which we have alluded, all the others resigned in sympathy. To restore peace, Louis the Fifteenth suspended the proceedings which had been begun before an extraordinary Commission of the Council, and reinstated the Rennes magistrates, who immediately began an action against the Duc d'Aiguillon. The latter, whose conscience was perfectly easy, demanded that he should be tried by his peers in the Parlement

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of Paris; but the King could not allow that legal proceedings should be instituted against a representative of his own authority. He therefore commanded that the proceedings should cease. Parlement's reply to that was to forbid d'Aiguillon to take his seat as a peer, until he had cleared himself.

Matters had now reached a point where there was only one solution, and that was force. The monarchical constitution did not exist in writing. Those fundamental laws which Louis himself declared he was in the happy position of being powerless to overthrow, were nothing but a collection of fictions. Like every civilized social order, the monarchy rested on an assemblage of moral values, on ideas of the *sacred*, the *just*, the *legal*, the *seemly* and the *praiseworthy*, on all that which M. Paul Valéry calls the geodesical landmarks of order. For nearly a century, the words *King*, *Honour*, *Fidelity*, *Obedience* had had sufficient magic about them, to render coercion superfluous. But by twenty years of mockery and sophisms, the magistrates had debased them, held them up to ridicule, rendered them odious and denuded them of their legitimate meaning. To recover its prestige, the Monarchy must needs do something to justify its existence, realizing that it was all a matter of condition and premiss and that, if it could only maintain itself for a time, it would still remain an armed force triumphant over chaos. Louis the Fifteenth, then, showed himself a true King. In him the instinct of conservation was neither attenuated nor perverted. In 1766, when none had expected his coming, he suddenly appeared before the Parlement, and to the assembled magistrates, who sat dumbfounded before him, he administered this crushing rebuke:

'I will not tolerate,' he said, 'that a body with purely imaginary rights shall, by obtruding itself into the State, disturb its prevailing harmony. The Magistracy in no wise constitutes a body apart, nor an order separate from the three Estates of the Realm. The sovereign authority is vested in my sole person; it is from me alone that my Courts derive their authority and their power to administer justice. The plenary source of that authority, which they exercise in my name, is vested in myself alone, and the use thereof cannot be turned against me. In me alone resides the legislative power, which is complete in itself, and is shared with no one. It is by virtue of my sole authority that the officers of my Courts proceed, not indeed to the making of laws, but to the enregistering, publication and execution thereof. The public order, in its entirety, emanates from me, and the rights and interests of the Nation, whereof some would now make a body separate



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and distinct from the Monarch, are of necessity one with my own rights and interests, and cannot but remain in my hands.'

The following day he had given a similar reception to a deputation from the Norman Parlement:

'I have read your remonstrances,' said he. 'Never send me their like again. My people are dutiful and content; the restlessness which you allege, exists solely in your own minds. The vow that I made, not, as you suppose, to the Nation, but to God alone, binds me, before all else, to bring back to the path of duty such as have erred and strayed from it, and would fain establish principles contrary to the constitution of my realm.'

A great deal of speculation has been rife as to the causes which led to Choiseul's dismissal. We need, however, do no more than contemplate the blind-alley into which he was bidding fair to lead the monarchy. People have spoken of his impertinences, his witty sallies, the arrogant temper of his sister, Madame de Gramont, their disputes with Madame d'Esparbes, their public and decidedly piquant jests at the expense of Madame du Barry. Mention has been made of an article written at the behest of the favourite, in which Choiseul's policy came in for violent censure. But those who quote it, have failed to see that so far from telling against him in the eyes of the King, it would have quite the opposite effect, since it upbraided him with his fidelity to the Austrian alliance, of which Louis the Fifteenth was wont to declare, 'That was my doing!' The so-called 'Memoirs' of the Duc de Choiseul involve Madame du Barry, the Jesuits, Madame Adelaide and the pious party in one indiscriminate condemnation. But these alleged memoirs are a fearsome amalgam of highly suspicious pamphlets, almost all fabricated to order by professional forgers. The only portions which, by any possibility, can be regarded as authentic, are precisely those which contain nothing of interest.

Looked at in many ways, Choiseul was a great minister and a great man, but, at this particular moment, he was blinded by ambition. As a conflict had just broken out between England and Spain in the matter of the Falkland Islands, he secretly sent word to Madrid counselling them to stand firm and not to yield an inch, thinking that now had come the chance to obtain that revenge for which he had so long been waiting. War with England, when Austria was going and joining hands with Prussia! War with England, when the Throne was tottering and the Treasury empty! Louis fulminated against such rashness. With his sovereign good sense, he realized that,

unless they desired to court irretrievable disaster, they must embark on no adventures abroad till they had set things right at home. There could be no victory, if the conditions for victory were lacking.

But Choiseul was generally regarded as sympathizing with the Parlements. Himself a great noble, he could not find it in him to hate this new form of feudalism. He had always stood out for negotiations, for coming to terms, for concessions, for everything which his cousin Praslin call a religious respect for form. A change of policy was not possible without a change of ministers. On December 21st, 1770, after a great deal of shilly-shallying, the King decided that the Dukes would have to go, and forthwith he wrote to the King of Spain as follows: 'Monsieur mon frère et cousin, Your Majesty is aware how widespread is the spirit of independence and fanaticism in my Kingdom. Up to the present, patience and forbearance have been my guides, but matters have now overpast the limits of my endurance. My Parlements have so far forgotten themselves as to claim for themselves that royal authority which I hold of God alone. I am therefore determined by every means in my power to secure obedience to my commands. With things in this position, war would be a cruel affliction both for myself and for my people.'

It was the evening of the 23rd that the blow fell. The Duc de Choiseul was handing a pen to the King to sign the marriage contract of the Duc de la Rochefoucauld. The King's features were greatly discomposed, as, with an expression of mingled rage and concern, he snatched the pen from the minister's hand. Choiseul knew that the end had come. Next morning, at ten o'clock, he was banished to Chanteloup, and his cousin to Praslin.

For twenty years the King had been hampered by the privileged classes; for twenty years Frenchman had been pitted against Frenchman in a civil contest of the most disastrous character. They condemned themselves, of their own accord, to consume in fratricidal strife, that ardour of spirit and energy of action which, had they but been united, would have brought unnumbered benefits to the common weal. When at length he resolved to use force against the malcontents and to crush this resurgent feudalism beneath the weight of his sceptre, Louis the Fifteenth restored to the Monarchy its rightful role as guardian of the public welfare. He made himself the instrument whereby the interests of the nation as a whole were upheld against the individual or sectional interests of the insurgents, and thus renewed the reign of Strength, of Reason and of Justice.

## CHAPTER XI

### ON THE KING'S SIDE

CERTAINLY it is no easy matter for a critic to set up a hierarchy of letters and to array his authors in order of merit. No doubt there are several things to help him in his task; there is the verdict of the great, the searching test of Time, the canons of taste, to say nothing of the appeal, so hard to resist, of his own personal predilections. For the historian who would do his best to give a true picture of a vanished age, this method is beset with peculiar perils. There are writers whom we look upon as the heralds of a new era, who, in their own times, were scarcely heard of, and as little read; there are others, neglected by this generation, who passed for great men in their day. Are we called to estimate the influence of an innovator? We readily pin our faith to some *ben trovato* anecdote, to the uncertainties of hearsay and tradition, and to the fleeting impressions of our desultory reading. Even more perilously delicate is the task of discriminating between the several works of any given author. Time works some strange revolutions, and books to which, when they first came out, the public paid no heed, take on, a hundred and fifty years later, the same authority as those which leapt into public favour at a bound.

The 'Age of Reason' simply revelled in superstition. Almost up to the threshold of the Revolution, *Le Grand et Le Petit Albert* went on coming out in a ceaseless succession of editions, and so did books about magic, manuals that told you how to call forth Satan and harness the powers of nature to your bidding. If it fell a little from its high estate, this devil-raising, the Comte de Saint Germain and Cagliostro gave it a new lease of life and shed a fresh lustre on it. The banquet of Mesmer could claim as many disciples as the philosophising of Jean Jacques Rousseau. Credulity and the lore of the *illuminati* were in the hey-day of their efflorescence, just when the critical mind of Sequin, an advocate in the Lyons Parlement, was gravely laying down that Cardinal de Tencin had been guilty of incestuous intercourse with his sister and that he had had a son by her called 'le Sieur d'Ardinberg'; that was all he knew of the

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mathematician and the editor of the *Encyclopaedia*! And how many were there who did not even know as much!

The eighteenth century is the age of dictionaries. It opened with *Bayle's Dictionary*; the *Encyclopaedia* was its half-way house, and it finished up with the *Encyclopédie Méthodique* of Pancoucke, in 166 volumes, one of the most colossal publishing enterprises ever brought to completion. From the time it began to the time it ended, the period abounds in *catalogues raisonnés*, treatises, bibliographies, dictionaries of medicine, of law, of household science, painting, cookery, police, geography, history, literature, farming, sociology, and love. Let us not deny Diderot his due place; it was an important one, but we must not forget that the *Rêve de d'Alembert*, the *Supplément au Voyage de Bougainville*, the *Religieuse*, the *Neveu de Rameau*, *Jacques le Fataliste*, the *Lettres* and the *Salons* did not see the light until the time of the Directory, the Restoration or the Second Empire. The only Diderot his contemporaries knew was the Diderot who manufactured lachrymose melodramas, and collaborated with d'Alembert on the *Encyclopaedia*. According to Voltaire, the *Encyclopaedia* was Babel. It was a general receptacle for anything and everything. Nowadays we marvel at the subtle arrangement whereby the editors were enabled to make one article give the lie to another. The article 'Birth' contradicts the article 'Soul'; the article 'God' is demolished by 'Demonstration', 'Ethiopean' and 'Chronology.' We doubt, however, whether the subscribers were mightily interested in doctrine. Probably they were much more keen on applied sciences, practical instruction, and pictures of engines.

In 1788, Marat was giving open-air lectures on the *Contrat Social*, but twenty years earlier, the *Contrat Social* was merely regarded as a sort of *parergon* of some larger work, a kind of scholar's pastime, a theorist's hobby, something to amuse himself withal, in which no one else, unless it were the Genevans, would be likely to get up any interest. Of Rousseau's works, everyone regarded the *Nouvelle Héloïse* as miles above any of the others. Jean Jacques had his band of devoted women friends, and fanatical male admirers but – and in this they resembled the majority of his *confrères* – the people generally looked on him as a strange animal, or a sick man, or a lunatic. It was only after the visit to England (1767) that persecution, loneliness and suffering made him appear, to people of a thoughtful turn of mind living quietly and contentedly on their incomes, like some wretched prophet, pursued and harassed by the wicked whose sins he had chastised. Fanatical enthusiasm for the

man and his work did not become epidemic till the time of the Ermenonville pilgrimages, fifteen years later.

M. Daniel Mornet has ransacked the catalogues of five hundred private libraries belonging to contemporaries of Louis the Fifteenth—titled people, magistrates, public servants, advocates, soldiers, doctors, etc. and this was the result of his investigation: the *Contrat Social* appeared once; Diderot's *Lettre sur les Aveugles*, seven times; the *Discours sur l'Inégalité*, seventy-six times; the *Encyclopédie*, eighty-two; Mirabeau the elder's *Ami des Hommes*, one hundred and twenty-nine; the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie*, a hundred and thirty-four; the *Siècle de Louis XIV*, one hundred and sixty-one; the *Nouvelle Héloïse*, one hundred and sixty-five; the *Henriade*, one hundred and eighty-one; the Abbé Pluche's *Spectacle de la Nature* (how utterly forgotten, these days!) two hundred and six; Buffon's *Histoire naturelle*, two hundred and twenty, and Bayle's *Dictionnaire* (the favourite, this) two hundred and eighty-eight. And if we were to turn our gaze on the writers of earlier ages we should find, with some amazement, that the authors whose works were most regularly republished were Marot, Villon, Racan, and, with them, the *Roman de la Rose*, and *la Farce de maître Pathelin*!

M. Marnet is careful not to prove too much from his figures. All the same their significance is something more than that of a few haphazard soundings. Taken in conjunction with the information we possess regarding the number and size of the various editions, they give us a pretty exact general idea of the lie of the literary land as it appeared to the reading public of the day.

If we were asked to sum up the intellectual outlook of the eighteenth century, at all events so far as its writers were concerned, it might be held that it was anti-Christian, but not that it was anti-Monarchical. From the time of Fontenelle onwards, the philosophers thought they found evidence destructive of religion in every branch of knowledge. Did not the Science of Mathematics and Physics display the human reason mounting ever higher and higher to the loftiest altitudes of intellectual speculation, holding nothing beyond its understanding, nor any field of knowledge or inquiry beyond the possibility of ultimate attainment, steadily pursuing the eternally receding frontiers of knowledge, driving ignorance and, with it, mystery beyond the ever-widening limits of the fields of light? The natural sciences reveal to the inquirer a universe governed by inexorable and never-ceasing laws which wholly exclude the intervention of a deity. A long tale of the cruelties, follies and sufferings of men,

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History, at every stage, refutes the bare idea of Providence. Geology goes counter to Genesis. The progress of the useful arts is a witness against the notion of original sin – fallen creatures would assuredly never be capable of discovering such a wealth of marvels.

It may possibly be thought that the philosophers were easily satisfied and their reason made no excessive demands. It is true that they had no idea of the things that go to make up the religious mind, or of what is meant by faith. They never dreamt of the existence of the inward certitude, the indefectible certitude of the heart. At every turn they raised the cry of 'lie', 'imposture'. They spoke ill, and withal basely and unintelligently of the 'theological epochs', of men and deeds whose greatness dwells apart in mystic realms. The more notable, and indeed the greater number, still clung to their belief in a just God, who had implanted in man a conscience and a soul. The boldest, and the more secretive, Helvetius, d'Holbach, La Mettrie, Diderot (the Holbach sect) believed in the existence of only one element, viz., matter, and they held that matter is everywhere. The resistance offered by the clergy was woefully disappointing. Not, indeed, that they lacked knowledge, or virtue. What they lacked was brains, talent, ability. Certainly the theologians succeeded, on no less than three occasions, in setting the law in motion against those authors who preached materialism – in 1749, after Diderot's *Lettre sur les Aveugles*; in 1752, in connection with a thesis of the Abbé de Prades; and again in 1759, after Helvetius's treatise *De l'Esprit*. But the law loosened its grip, and the Sorbonne made itself ridiculous with its continual anathemas. The episcopate had no Bossuet now. The Jesuit Fathers who were responsible for the *Journal de Trévoux*, and the clerics of the *Nouvelles Ecclésiastiques* and the *Journal de Verdun* – all these Christian apologists whom M. Albert Monod has so carefully enumerated for us, were learned and laborious men, but that was all. Père Nonnotte spent some years of his life in compiling a catalogue of Voltaire's errors, which he set down in due order, together with his truncated quotations, his misreadings, his mistaken references. All this he did with a mighty squandering of his stores of learning, but the learning was so unprofitable, so lumbering and so thankless, that by the time you had read a score of pages the book would fall from your hands and you would hasten to refresh your jaded spirit in the sparkling atmosphere of *Candide*. Fréron, the best equipped of the Catholic controversialists, had abundance of life and raciness. He caught the ridiculous side of his antagonists, but he never got down to the bed-rock of things. He

derived amusement from trouncing their sectarian spirit, their self-conceit, the way they arranged things to their own advantage, their log-rolling, and, for the rest, he took his stand on authority. But authority was a poor card to play in an age that chiefly prided itself on setting the authorities at defiance.

The progress of the anti-religious movement affected the monarchy indirectly, on the rebound as it were, and in proportion as the monarchy insisted on the doctrine of divine right. But the monarchy had other strings to its bow besides divine right. It could point to its public utility, to services rendered, and to its conformity with the genius of the nation. The necessity for this positive monarchy was demonstrated by reason and verified by experience. It was a monarchy designed for those who no longer professed a creed or who, holding that all rights proceed from God, would claim for the Kingship its own peculiar right or title, namely the historical one. The realist or positivist monarchy of the economists, the feudal monarchy of Fénelon and Montesquieu, the democratic individualism of Diderot and Rousseau, such were the three contrasted schools of political thought under Louis the Fifteenth. The feudalists based their policy on the ancient institutions, Parlements, States General, Convocation of Clergy; the philosophers relied on the Academies, the cafés and the salons; the positivists on the governing machine, on the middle-classes and on the big landed-proprietors. The feudalists squandered their strength and their credit in carrying on a blind and selfish opposition. The democrats as yet, were nothing but a noisy mob; their time was to come under Louis the Sixteenth, when the monarchy, like a helmless barque, was fated to drift at the mercy of every current of opinion. The positivists were the Present; they were the workers, the producers, the creators of wealth and they sketched in with bold strokes the lineaments of a rejuvenated France.

The Age of Louis the Fifteenth saw the birth, at one and the same time, of both the Natural and Economic Sciences. Of course, Natural History was not dealt with for the first time by Buffon. We need not go back to Pliny to find references to the animal kingdom, they abound in the literature of the Middle Ages. But there all the descriptions were encumbered with an accompaniment of miracles and marvels. People were convinced that God had arranged the Universe in its existing form for the express purpose of convincing even the most hasty observer of his power and his benevolence. The geologists were professional theologians who made use of

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pebbles, plants and planets to furnish a commentary on the Bible, the Deluge, Noah's Ark and, when need arose, to refute Galileo, Copernicus, and Newton. The Encyclopaedists made fun of these pious commentators; but they themselves, fell head first into the same pitfall. D'Alembert apart, they are all purveyors of Science without tears, and of Physics for the Ladies. If they turned their attention to earthquakes, it was in order to call in question the infinite goodness of God. Buffon belonged neither to the Encyclopaedia, nor to a philosophical society, nor to a salon, nor to a club. He had spent his days in two gardens, his own, at Montbard, and the King's garden, with the care of which Louis the Fifteenth had entrusted him, and which he managed for fifty years. He aimed, and he almost succeeded, at being pure intelligence occupied with the contemplation of things eternal.

In none of the attributes of the man of Science was he lacking; love of observation; infinite patience; an inexhaustible capacity for vast, incessant and peaceful labour; an instinct for order, clearness of vision; an entire absence of passion and prejudice; scientific imagination; a gift for formulating systems and a wholesome contempt for the same when they presumed to take on the authority of dogmas — all these gifts and endowments were his. Between his *Théorie de la Terre* and the *Epoques de la Nature*, there were many points on which he refuted his own ideas. When, owing to the imperfection of his instruments, he had, perforce, to suspend his observations, it was a rare thing when he had not two ideas to put up against another's one, a rare thing if, while keeping hold of the old traditional hypothesis, he did not perceive, before anyone else had thought of it, some new and contrary hypothesis, which eventually turned out to be the true one. He contemplated nature with tranquil, trustful and submissive eye. He possessed the impartiality, the serenity, and the intellectual freedom of the man whose sole desire it was to learn and to know; to understand and to pass on the light to others.

This attitude of intellectual honesty was precisely that of the economists who grouped themselves around Quesnay. Just as men had interested themselves in animals and rock-formations before the time of Buffon, so also, before ever Quesnay came on the scene; they had been interested in the origin and distribution of wealth. But the doctrines which they had put forward were impregnated with moral and religious considerations, or relegated to the level of mere utilitarian recipes. Just as Buffon established the independence of the physical sciences, so it is to Quesnay that credit is due for



being the first to recognize that economic phenomena constitute an order of recognizable facts, dependent on certain laws derived from the intrinsic nature of things.

François Quesnay came of a family of well-to-do farmers. It was a gardener who taught him his letters, out of Liébaut's *Maison rustique*, and his disciples discerned therein the Finger of Providence. Nevertheless it was to biology that the future economist first turned his attention. He showed great ability as a medical man, and, as the author of several works on pathology, he became celebrated in his profession. He was called in to attend Madame de Pompadour and, in 1752, became physician-in-ordinary to the King. Louis the Fifteenth conceived a deep regard for this austere professional man, just as he had previously been attracted by the grave, undeviating Machault. He listened eagerly to his advice, called him 'my thinker,' and assigned him quarters close to his own in a little *entresol* of the *Cour de Cerfs*. Quesnay was reputed to be one of the ablest men of his day. In 1758, when he was sixty-four years of age, he published his first book on political economy. It was printed at the Château, at the royal press. The story goes that, out of veneration for the author, the King himself supervised the printing. The book, in point of fact, was made up of three smaller works, the *Tableau économique*, the *Questions Intéressantes sur la Population l'Agriculture et le Commerce* and, lastly the *Maximes Générales du Gouvernement d'un Royaume Agricole*. Scarcely had it appeared, when the *Tableau* created a prodigious sensation, and no one ever thought of smiling when the Marquis de Mirabeau declared that from the invention of writing down to the invention of coined money, the human race had never been enriched by a work of greater practical value.

Quesnay, then, leapt into celebrity in a single day. He became the object of a cult; he had his circle of admirers, of devotees. People called them Physiocrats because they taught that Agriculture was the only form of human activity whose productiveness is indefectible. Precious metals, mineral riches, manufactured articles all tend to wear out and come to nought by being used or consumed. Agriculture alone fulfils the ideal of the continuous collaboration of man with nature, of man and the living plant, of man and the fruitful earth. The fruits of the earth are the only form of wealth which reproduces itself and which may be consumed without impoverishment. The work of the plant which strikes its roots into the soil, and is self-nourishing, which breathes, and grows and multiplies its species, renders the agricultural body the only one which is in the

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strict sense of the word, productive, that is to say, the only one which creates. All the rest are sterile. Such was the point from which they started. The system implies a theory of value (of doubtful validity), a theory of population and of the circulation of wealth, a justification of property and, finally a doctrine of natural order, which, necessarily and of itself, engenders a policy.

All these parts are interdependent and intrinsically indivisible. They cannot be sundered one from another without bringing the whole structure to the ground. All the same, emphasis may be laid on one part rather than upon another and that is precisely what has been done by the followers and popularisers of Quesnay's ideas, some laying stress on the improvement of crops, others on the freedom of trade, the latter concerning themselves with the corn-laws, the former with the tax on land. Still there have come down to us two complete and systematic expositions of what this physiocracy really amounted to. One of these treatises, compiled by Le Mercier de la Rivière, under dictation from Quesnay himself and entitled *l'Ordre Naturel et Essentiel des Sociétés Politiques* (1767); the other, shorter, brighter, not so dry-as-dust, was by Dupont of Nemours and was called *De l'origine et des progrès d'une science nouvelle*.

Dupont and Mercier both address themselves to a consideration of the question regarding the qualities that go to make up a good government, and both alike come to the conclusion that an hereditary monarchy offers the only guarantee of a perfect community of interests between the nation and the government. In a democracy, the power is entrusted to representatives of the people, that is to say, to private individuals whose functions are necessarily of limited duration. Such persons, dressed in a little brief authority, cannot possibly have a permanent community of interests with the nation. They have, or at least they may have, exclusive interests of their own which are opposed to those of public order and the State in general. It might even happen that the State's misfortunes would be their gain, offering them the means of enriching themselves and making profits. And these individuals, though divided among themselves, would always be found standing together as one man, when any proposed reform menaced the continuance of their ill-gotten gains. No less can be said of the aristocracies and elective monarchies. Dictators, the members of a Senate have children, property, kinsfolk, who are their sole concern, who will subsist independently of their position, and who will go on subsisting after their sovereignty has passed away. They have therefore a peculiar

and exclusive interest in using the power of which, for the time being, they are the repositories to improve and extend their estates, and to increase the wealth and influence of their family. "Therefore it is only hereditary monarchs whose personal and private interests both present and to come, can be intimately, sensibly and manifestly identified with the interests of their nations by virtue of their co-property in all the products of the soil committed to their governance.

. . . An hereditary monarchy presents the most perfect form of government. No doubt there was a danger that the King might be tempted to abuse his power. But as soon as he reflected on his own interests and in what direction they lay, he would be brought back to a proper respect for the natural laws. In fact the more hungry he was for property, the more anxious he would be for the prosperity of his kingdom. If troubles disturb the harmony of the country, the clear knowledge of good order 'sufficed to re-establish that order because, then, the common interests of the sovereign, the land-owners and of all who, of necessity, valued the body politic, would absolutely compel its re-establishment; in a word, because all the desires and consequently all the energies of the State are united for this purpose in the person of the Sovereign'. 'An hereditary monarch,' says Dupont definitely, 'has a personal interest in the increase of his subject's wealth, in the defence of property, in facilities for trade, and in the spread of education. He will, therefore, surround himself with the best advisers, the ablest and most attentive magistrates, he will make no attempt to act contrary to nature, but will rule in accordance with her laws, for, writes Mercier "it is a physical impossibility that the sovereign, without inflicting an injury on himself, should increase his own receipts at the expense of the national income".'

It is remarkable, that five years after the *Contrat Social* the theory of hereditary monarchy should have been expressed so forcibly by all those who were reputed to be the profoundest thinkers of their day. Voltaire was never tired of mocking at their hymns to the Earth and their schemes of national finance, but in regard to the superiority of a monarchy over all other forms of government, his ideas were at one with theirs. Always in the thick of the fight, always in a hurry, availing himself of any weapon he could lay hold of, he did not hesitate to contradict himself, if it gave him a momentary advantage. He would often launch an attack without meaning any harm, simply because the circumstances invited, so as to win a laugh and a cheer from the gallery, and to prove how

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excellently sharp his arrows were. He exhibited the faults of his time, because his faults were everyone's and everyone's were his. He was highly strung, impressible, tremulously alive to the slightest currents of opinion. If he experienced a pleasure, he must needs share it; if a thing fired his indignation, he must needs shout it from the housetops; if he was stirred to anger, the rest of the world must be angry too. So sensitive was he to every influence, that none was ever permanent. But through all these eddies of conflicting moods and notions, he stood firm in the conviction that progress, the growth of culture and the increase of the national well-being had been due to a few great rulers who had encouraged, supported and consulted the geniuses of their times. That is one of the central ideas of the *Essai sur les Mœurs*; it is indeed the upshot and conclusion of the Age of Louis the Fourteenth.

His political creed is summed up in a handful of sallies and epigrams which are to be found *passim*, scattered about throughout his writings. 'The greater part of the human race have been and will long remain foolish and imbecile; I would sooner obey a good lion than a couple of hundred rats of my own species; the knaves in their garrets who govern the world with their inkpots are the biggest fools of all; I could never endure that the man who makes my wigs, should also make my laws; despotism is royalty gone bad; a king that is never thwarted can hardly be a bad one; if I had to choose, I would rather be ruled by one tyrant, than by many; a despot always has his good moments, a group of despots never.' He was continually attacking Montesquieu's feudal monarchy. Rousseau he called a revolutionary and wanted his head off. A Louis the Fourteenth without the Jesuits – such was, pretty nearly, his ideal of a government, and that is what he believed he had found in Frederick, in Berlin. When he was in a temper, he was more royalist than the King. Louis proclaimed that he was subject to the laws of God, but Voltaire demanded a sovereign whose rule should know no bounds, who should have everyone and everything in the palm of his hand – judges, soldiers, priests, under whose sceptre law and order should prevail; a King who, though a sceptic himself, should maintain a religion for his people's sake; a king humane, tolerant, a friend to the arts and ready to prove himself so by ordering public performances of M. de Voltaire's tragedies, and confining his critics in the Bastille.

Rousseau, Rousseau himself, levelled some very grave criticism against democracy. Nor, in this, was he merely playing for safety. It

was the result of experience, and a return along the way he had come. After the *Contrat Social*, his political ideas went through three successive stages. To begin with he declared that a democratic form of government was only suited to little States, where the people could easily be gathered together, or, at least, where a man might quite easily know all his fellows, and where there was no luxury, little wealth and little business. Subsequently he declared that a republic was so beautiful that it would not work. 'If,' he said, 'there were a race of Gods, they would rule themselves democratically. So perfect a government is not suited to men.' Finally, he abjured it altogether. At such times, he invoked Hobbes, the English philosopher, who believed in the innate wickedness of man, and proclaimed that a despotism was the sole means of restraining his evil propensities.

Perhaps we ought to give a few quotations. On January 13th, 1767, Jean Jacques wrote to his compatriot, d'Ivernois, as follows: 'You may have seen, in the course of our exchange of views, that I am no visionary, and in the *Contrat Social*, I never approved of democratic government.' (And he may even have believed it, for the book is full of contradictions.) July 26th, in the same year, he wrote to the Marquis de Mirabeau, the ebullient disciple of Quesnay, who called the Encyclopaedists a lot of conceited rogues, and this is what he said: 'Here, in my old ideas, is the great problem in politics, the one which I compare to that of squaring the circle in geometry; how to find a form of government that shall put the Law above man. If it is to be found, let us seek it out. If, unfortunately, it is not to be found, and I candidly confess that I do not think it is, my opinion is that we should go to the other extreme and straightway put man as far above the law as may be; that is to say set up an arbitrary despotism and make it the most arbitrary possible.'

Six months later, when he had the Geneva disturbances on his mind and despaired of ever seeing the civil disagreements satisfactorily settled, he flung off this exhortation in the classic mode to his friends, an effusion which Jules Lemaître averred struck him like an extract from a flamboyant oration of some tub-thumper of the market-place. 'Yes, gentlemen, you have one course left you to pursue, and that course, if I may say so, is the only one consonant with your self-respect. It is this: instead of staining your hands with the blood of your compatriots, to surrender to them these walls which should have been the sanctuary of freedom, but which shall be to you henceforth but the homing-place of tyrants; to come forth from them, all of you, into the light of day, you and your wives and

children, and, since fettered you must be, at least to wear the fetters of some great prince, and not the hateful and insufferable yoke of your equals.' Rousseau bequeathed to the most systematic and violent among the revolutionaries a sentimental policy, with phraseology and forms to match; but when the fever and the fret had passed, he himself abjured them, and in advance.

Illustrations drawn from history were pressed into the service to supplement the theoretic defence of kingly government. Clerics and laymen continued to rival one another in searching among the records of the past. A Benedictine, a man of superior intellectual endowments, towered above the scholars of his time. Dom Bernard de Montfaucon – such was his name – had embraced the religious life, after serving in the army under Turenne. Something of a combative gaiety, inherited from his experience as a soldier, sometimes gave his works the gusto and excitement of a battle. It was he who, overcoming all obstacles, brought about in 1725, the publication of *les Monuments de la Monarchie Française*, in which he included a great quantity of hitherto neglected historical material, a wealth of information regarding costume, tapestry, arms, flags, buildings, etc. His successors and disciples, Dom Bouquet, Dom Félibien, Dom Calmet, Dom Vaissete, brought out large provincial histories, and began the *Recueil des Historiens des Gaules et de la France*. All these labours were followed up by the *Académie des Inscriptions*, which was responsible for a *Recueil des Ordonnances des Rois* and a *Table Chronologique des Diplômes*.

Lastly, the Abbé Dubos, in his *Critical History of the French Monarchy*, proved that the Frankish Kings did not enter Gaul as conquerors, but in the guise of mercenaries and allies; that they became an integral part of the Roman organization and sought the confirmation of the Emperors, that the national aristocracy never parted with their property, that the Gauls were never reduced to slavery or treated as an inferior race, but, that on the contrary, they gradually assimilated the newcomers, and finally that the famous privileges of the nobility were gained by usurpation and at the expense of the integrity of the State. Thus revolutionaries and neo-feudalists alike were deprived of their pretext for dissension, of a weapon against their country, and thus were affirmed the unity and solidarity of the nation.

Said Turgot one day to Madame Husset, 'The love which Frenchmen bear their Kings is no blind love. It is a deep-seated affection and springs from the recollection of great benefits received.' The

immense amount of historical labours accomplished by men of learning provided thoughtful minds with a means of basing those dim recollections on a solid basis of historic fact. But the work was the work of 'Specialists', worthy, serious, cautious and dry. They lacked attractiveness, charm, and sparkle, the power to detect the spirit beneath the letter. And for this reason their appeal was limited.

The physiocrats belonged for the most part to the upper branches of the Civil Service or to the country nobility. Mercier de la Rivière was intendant of Martinique, Turgot was *maître de requêtes* and intendant of Limousin, Gournay was in charge of the Board of Trade, Foulette was intendant of Basse Normandie, Trudaine de Montigny was intendant of Finance, Bertin Minister of State and Controller-General for four years (between Silhouette and Laverdy) and subsequently, for fifteen years head of a department which was known by the decidedly uninformative name of 'M. Bertin's Department.' It took in agriculture, horse and cattle-breeding, mines, royal manufactures, inland waterways, rolling stock and mail-coaches.

The fact that the government circles became so rapidly indoctrinated with Quesnay's ideas throws an instructive light on a hitherto rather unexplored section of society. It is one of the queer things about our story. We have abundant information about the literary people. They talked a lot, wrote a lot and took care to bequeath panegyrics of themselves to posterity. We have a very detailed account of Madame Geoffrin's scolding tongue, of Madame du Deffand's severities, of Mademoiselle de Lespinasse's love affairs. We know that Madame du Deffand was anything but an early riser, that she was bored with life and that she wore a lace hood. We know that Mademoiselle de Lespinasse was her reader, that she pitted herself as a wit against her mistress in the latter's own ante-chamber, and that after a terrible squabble, she set up a rival shop in the Rue Bellechasse. We are told also that the deserter had two lovers, that one of them (the nicer) died young, but that the other was a colonel and that his business was to be a big gun – and that was the long and the short of it. But we know nothing about the men who, for sixty years, held the lives, the property and the honour of their fellow-countrymen in the palm of their hand. They did not trouble themselves about posterity; they talked little and divulged less, about themselves and their affairs. Their papers were ransacked during the Revolution; their private correspondence was dispersed

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or destroyed. To acquaint oneself with their official correspondence one would have to go down into the country and search through the departmental files. But the passion for perfect documentation is not sufficiently strong in the majority of writers to move them to take all that trouble. So it comes about that writers still persist in picturing the monarchy of the *ancien régime*, as something on all fours with our present day governments, with their cabinets made up of a number of men each of whom is responsible for his own special department; the Chancellor, for example, the Chief Justice, the Controller-General of Finance and four or five Secretaries of State – Foreign Affairs, War, Navy, the King's Household and Agriculture (Bertin). It should be noted, first of all, that there was no Minister of the Interior and that correspondence with the provinces, in connection with official appointments, pardons, policy and the control of local bodies was shared out among the Secretaries of State. Nor was that the sole anomaly. Choiseul, who was Secretary for War, continued to take charge of the dispatches for Spain, although his cousin Praslin was officially responsible for Foreign Affairs. The Controller-General seems to have had authority over all matters of an economic or financial nature, but he could not authorize a single item of expenditure, nor open a single credit; when he sat on a commission it was only with the rank conferred upon him by his seniority as a Councillor of State and it sometimes happened that his own departmental chiefs had precedence of him, and a prior right of speech. There were ministers who had no offices, and the fact of being Chancellor, or Secretary of State, or Controller-General did not confer on the holders of these offices the right to call themselves ministers. Lastly and most important of all, the Secretaries of State of the Old Regime, unlike modern ministers, could not decide anything on their own responsibility, so that, however much his own personal predilections may have led him to prefer to work alone, or in a *tête à tête* conference with a single collaborator, the King did not govern with the aid of individuals but with the assistance of his Councils. 'The King in Council,' the formula which figured at the head of all legislative or administrative enactments, is the one which, in two or three words, best summarizes the principle, the underlying system.

Who, then, it will be asked, were the King's advisers?

In the first place come the men who alone were strictly entitled to call themselves ministers, that is to say the members of the Upper Council, which was also known as the Secret Council, the King's



Council of State, or, simply, the Council. They varied in number from four to eight and met two or three times a week. Questions of high policy formed the subject matter of their deliberations: peace, war, treaties, alliances, foreign relations, the Army, the Navy, Home Defence. In 1768, for example, it consisted of the following: the Maréchal de Soubise, the Duc de Choiseul, the Duc de Praslin, the Maréchal d'Estrée, the Comte de Saint Florentin, MM. Bertin and Laverdy. The Secretaries of State came to the Council Chamber with portfolios bulging with papers and, from the mass of detailed matter with which their duties compelled them to deal, they selected whatever appeared to them to be of general interest. Choiseul read the reports of the Ambassadors and drafts of the replies which he proposed to send. Everyone gave his opinion in turn, and the King either wound up the debate with any remarks he might deem necessary, or left it to the meeting to decide.

The second Council was called the *Conseil des Dépêches* or Council of Dispatches. Sitting in this Council, the King was his own Minister of the Interior. All matters appertaining to the administration of the internal affairs of the realm, the provincial States and the Parlements came up before this Council for decision and dispatch. It represented the machinery which annulled any transaction that had been effected in contravention of law. The Almanach gives us the names of the members. They were the Vice-Chancellor Maupeou, Keeper of the Seals, Soubise, Choiseul, Praslin, d'Estrée, Saint-Florentin, Bertin, Laverdy, and two not hitherto met with: two Councillors of State, Daguesseau and Gilbert de Voisins.

The Third Council was the Royal Finance Council, or, for short, the Royal Council. It was what, in present day jargon, we should call the Council of Experts and Technicians. It dealt with questions relating to the Budget, the Treasury, loans, taxes, expenditure, contributions from the clergy and the States General; it had power to handle everything that had to do with public money. The Treasury accounts were laid before the King for approval or amendment; all public expenditure was authorized by him; the amount of revenue from taxation was made known to him; he fixed the amount of the *taille*, and distributed the credits among the various departments. Again, in the same year 1768, we find him being assisted by the following eight persons: the Vice-Chancellor, the Duc de Praslin, Bertin, Laverdy and four Councillors of State, namely Daniel Trudaine who supervised the salt-tax, the tax farmers and everything connected with roads and bridges, d'Ormesson who, in our day

would be director-general of direct taxation, Boullongne who had charge of the allocation of funds, the Debt and the Redemption Fund; Feydeau de Marville, a jurist and an expert authority in matters connected with Arts and Crafts.

We will not concern ourselves with the Trades Council, which never met and existed only on paper, but will proceed at once to the fourth and last Council, the Council of State, the Council proper, and at once the most numerous, the most complicated and the most active. It did not occupy the same rank as the others. Whereas the latter met on the first floor in the Grand Cabinet between the State Room and the King's bedchamber, it occupied modest quarters on the ground-floor, looking leftwards on to the Cour Royale. These quarters are still to be seen to-day, but bereft of their former splendour. Once the very Temple of the Law, flower pots and besoms and wheelbarrows now find a home within their walls. The Chancellor it was who filled the presidential chair at the meetings of the Council of State. The King was only represented by a vacant throne. Nevertheless, everything there was done in his name and it was always open to him to resume his place if it so pleased him. Louis the Fifteenth did attend on one occasion for the principle of the thing. It was on May 3rd, 1762, and it was an event. The King took his seat at the head of the table, considered two matters included on the agenda, listened to the pros and cons, conferred with his councillors, and took sides with the majority.

'These gentlemen have spoken very well,' he said, as he rose to depart.

'Sire,' answered the Chancellor, 'Your Majesty has many a *maître de requêtes* in a position to give you equal satisfaction.'

Whereupon the King withdrew and went up to his own apartments. But his appearance in the Council had given rise to a thorny question which needed the most delicate casuistry for its solution. When, in the report of a resolution, one read the words, 'The King in his Council,' that signified that he was not there and that the matter had been settled in a meeting on the ground-floor, in the presence of his armchair and his Chancellor. When the words employed, were 'The King *being* in his Council,' that meant undoubtedly that he was actually there in the flesh, but it also meant that it was a resolution passed in one of the assemblies that sat on the first-floor. What wording then was to be employed on May 3rd, 1762, in order to avoid confusion? The words, 'The King in his Council,' were allowed to stand at the beginning of the document,

as usual, but, at the end, were added the words, 'executed in His Majesty's presence.' Surely an elegant solution of the difficulty, and one well worthy of so enlightened an era.

The Council of State was, in the first place, our own Council of State as it exists to-day, that is to say the highest court of judicature in the kingdom, but it was also the Court of Appeal and, finally, it was a higher commission, which prepared the labours of the ministry, in which schemes of reform were worked out, in which laws were made and which, in eight cases out of ten, was the source from which the Contrôller-General, the Secretaries of State, the heads of the various departments, the Lieutenant of Police, the provincial intendants, the curator of the King's Library and the *prévôt des marchands*, the chief magistrate of Paris, were recruited. Over and above the ministers who had access to it during their period of office, it consisted of forty councillors and seventy *maîtres de requêtes*. It sat sometimes as a court of justice, and sometimes as a finance committee. One day, it would be adjudicating in some case of litigation, some error in procedure, some dispute with the ecclesiastical authorities. Another day it would be occupied with taxation regulations, and matters connected with tax-farming and monopolies. It would invite tenders for the furnishing of victuals and supplies to the Army, for the farming of indirect taxes and various other contracts. Round about it revolved some thirty or so commissions and offices. There was one for examination of suits-at-law, a sort of grand jury, one for legislation, others for colonial affairs, for supplying the working of the lower courts, for the printing and bookselling industry, for fixing the *taille*, for manufactures, for the guilds, for trade and customs, for the administration of the property of Protestant fugitives, for the suppression of tolls, for the reduction of mortgages, the liquidation of the Canadian debt, the control of the India Company, convent reform, remodelling of the fiscal system, etc. Some of those who sat on these commissions, such as bishops, barristers, parliamentary counsellors, delegates from the Chambers of Commerce, etc., were strangers to the Council.

A man entered the Council as he would enter a monastic order – for life. First came the apprenticeship: the *service des requêtes*, law, procedure, little odds and ends, minor reports. Was he industrious, accurate, clear-headed, well-conducted, a man of promise? Well then, give him this case to unravel, a very complicated and unintelligible affair; a good chance for him to air his knowledge and display his merits. Next would come fiscal discussions, administrative

work. This was the turning point. A *maître de requêtes* past his prime was like a coquette that has seen her best days. A little while and he would be done for, doomed to muddle away the rest of his days in little flats and shallows. Now or never, then, if he had any ambition in him, he must grab an intendantship, get put in charge of a province: one of the lesser districts to start with – Limoges, Riom, La Rochelle, Moulins, Poitiers; then somewhere rather wealthier perhaps, or a pleasanter place to live in, or a more difficult job to accomplish: Metz, Chalons, Valenciennes, Orléans, Tours, Alençon; and then, lastly, one of the plums: Languedoc, Brittany, Nancy, Alsace, Bordeaux, Rouen, Paris, which either makes you or mars you; which you leave with your flag flying, or else finished for life; either broken on the wheel or fortune's favourite, destined for the top of the tree – Councillor of State, Intendant of Finance, Controller-General, Minister!

In the museum at Versailles there is a picture which represents the Intendant La Galaizière taking possession of Lorraine in the King's name. The painter has portrayed him in a red robe, surrounded by officers of justice. His mien is majestic, the pose easy, yet stately. Beneath the enormous wig, the features seem a little inclined to fullness, the eyes are flashing. These administrators were great lovers of the arts and they kept the portrait-painters hard at work. Here is Tourny, Intendant of Limoges and Bordeaux, by Tocque; a costume of velvet and satin; the features full and round, red lips, eyes that look at you long and scrutinizingly. In the museum at Amiens, you may see the Comte d'Argenson by La Tour: a high black silk cravat wound closely round the neck, the mouth small, firm, with a touch of scorn about it, the expression of the eyes rather heavy, looking downwards from a head high in the air. In the Louvre there is an Orry by La Tour. Coat, breeches and stockings, all of silk, the blue ribbon across his chest, embroidered cuffs, curious short stumpy hands, an immense forehead, heavy eyebrows, curved nose, a smile, the eyes of a man who is amused, but not amazed, at life. And, again, in the Louvre, there is the head and shoulders of Trudaine by Lemoyne. He is attired in his Councillor's robes, but without display; the wig, flat; the bands quite plain without any lace. But it is a face you do not forget in a hurry; big featured, very much out of the common, with remarkable contrasts; tremendously arched eyebrows, very striking, and the eyebrows themselves as if they had been drawn with a pencil; little eyes, round and deep set, that look through you at a glance; a large thick

nose; nostrils that seem to be sniffing the breeze; a heavy, square jaw; the upper lip almost invisible, sinister-looking, like a sword slash; the nether lip thick and sensual, and then, above the neck, a complacent, comfortable-looking double-chin.

In all these faces, however, there is a certain family likeness; the same confident expression, the same strength, the same determination to exact obedience, the same authoritative air that comes of being accustomed to speak in the name of the King. They were all men strong on their legs, with their feet firmly planted on the ground. See how Bourgeois de Boyne, in his private diary, thunders anathema against new-fangled ideas. 'M. de Trudaine has often been reproached with being rather hard, and, particularly rather too fond of red-tape. But anyone may see that he only seems hard because he attaches importance to the observance of principles. Thus what people call his hardness is much more properly termed firmness, which, in another age, would be accounted a virtue, but is out of fashion these days. Nowadays, if a rule is against the grain, you go round it, and cave in to circumstances. Anarchy is growing stronger and stronger every day, and you are laughed at if you try to remind people of the old rules of conduct. . . . It is a very fortunate thing that there are still some people left who are strong enough to make a stand against the sort of things that go on these days.'

How misleading that eulogium would be if it led us to imagine that these men were a pack of grumblers, with a grudge against life. Stubborn, autocratic, energetic, fiery – all these adjectives apply to one or another of these men. One or two of them, even, were quite unmanageable and a trifle mad, like that Riches l'Aube who was intendant at Tours, and who, in his leisure moments, used to busy himself with constructing a geometrical chart by which to illustrate and expound the art of government. But you will not find a disgruntled or a laggard specimen among them. Many of them were very rich, with fine country houses full of costly furniture, beautiful gardens, excellent cellars. They spent money on pictures, tapestries, rich stuffs, oriental curiosities, collections of prints, bric-à-brac and pottery. There is still in existence the inventory of the contents of the Château de Mousseaux which belonged to Bourgeois de Boyne, son of a bank-cashier. It is a document with a highly piquant flavour. The cellars in particular are something to dream about: 150 bottles of champagne, 40 bottles of Alicante, 400 bottles of various wines, 2 kegs of brandy, a butt of Cyprus wine, a quarter-cask of Saint Emilion, a cask of Medoc, 3 casks of Perpignan wine,

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6 casks of wine grown on the de Boynes estate (vintage 1782), 6 quarter-casks of Burgundy (1778), 84 casks of red wine (1782), a tun of red wine containing 24 casks (1782). The list covers the whole of the next page. As for the other items, not a thing was omitted, from the 220 kitchen aprons to the Louis the Fifteenth, framed in gilt which, with fourteen pictures representing the Royal Family, adorns the '*grand salon de Compagnie*, the great room which looks out on and has access to, the ornamental gardens.' The *maîtres de requêtes* came of a highly assorted stock. Some were the sons of ordinary middle-class people or financiers; but most of them belonged to legal families and came of a long line of ancestors connected in various capacities with the law. Some among them, such as Turgot, Jullien, Feydeau de Brou, La Bourdonnaye de Blossac belonged to the old nobility and could go back to the fourteenth or fifteenth century. But marriage and intermarriage had put everyone on a level. Orry, the Controller-General, had a brother who was an Intendant of Finance, and two sisters. The elder of the sisters married Chaumont de la Galaizière, intendant of Lorraine: she was the wife, mother and grandmother of intendants. The younger sister married a president in the Parlement whose son, Bertier de Sauvigny, became intendant of Paris. On the other side, Bertier's son, who was also his assistant, married the daughter of one Foulon, a Councillor of State. He was father-in-law of Blossac the younger and brother-in-law by marriage, of Bruno d'Agay, intendant of Amiens. Trudaine was the son of a chief magistrate of Paris; he married a grand-daughter of Madame de la Sablière. She bore him a son, who became his assistant. He married him to the daughter of Bouvard de Fourqueux, a Councillor of State. This lady was also a niece of Montyon's and sister to Madame Maynon d'Invau, whose husband was a Controller-General.

These were all people of charm, easy to get on with. Nothing could be less severely official than their official communications. They had the knack of treating of the most difficult and involved matters in a way that was perfectly easy and unpedantic, sometimes indeed with a spice of wit, in language wholly free from barbarisms and technical jargon. Their manner, in a word, was that of well-bred gentlemen talking over their business affairs together; no useless phrases, just a few lines couched in clear precise language going straight to the point, without digression or circumlocution. The Ambassadors, in particular, liked to think that what they wrote would be read by the Council with zest and pleasure. They had

marked taste for the study of character and a conspicuous skill in portraying it. Accustomed to listen to the discourse of Kings and to being made the confidants of Statesmen, they naturally became profound and subtle psychologists. When it happened that their official position was not of sufficient importance to engage the attention of the sovereign by the intrinsic significance of their subject-matter, they essayed at least to entertain him with the wit and talent with which they adorned the presentment of it. In the dispatches of our envoys at Naples, Florence or Parma, there occur passages of which Stendhal might have been proud. I will refrain from burdening the reader with quotations, but here, to the life, is a portrait of Philip the Fifth of Spain and of his wife Elisabeth Farnese from the pen of an Ambassador. 'The King of Spain,' he says, 'takes thought for nothing at all, and only cudgels his brains to suit the Queen's pleasure. He has, moreover, this other defect, which is personal to him alone, and that is that, notwithstanding his complete insensibility, he does retain a taste for one thing, and that is for battles. If it were seriously proposed to him that he should go and conquer Picrochole and that the Queen wanted it, he would always be giving orders for his troops to invade Piedmont. If someone told him that the Spanish army in Italy was reduced to nothing, that 12,000 sick men were dragging along in its train, he would reply straight off, "the army then is not reduced to nothing since here you have 12,000 men who are not dead, and, besides those 12,000, there are still some more under arms . . . I have seen the Queen of Spain a prey to all manner of longings, hopes and fears, but never for a moment have I known her to think about herself. Her ambitions for her children know no limit. She has one ambition for herself, and that is to rule alone". One day, at the Escorial, she parried the French Ambassador's insinuations by a little play-acting with which he was only too familiar. "I am only a stupid," said she, "I don't understand any of these things, and that's why I don't meddle with them. Here comes the King. Speak to him about it . . . Go on, say something," she said turning to the King; "you make me lose patience with you. I've got to do all the talking for you and everything falls on me, while all I do is to repeat the decisions you yourself have arrived at." The King of Spain who, it is true enough, had little enough desire to speak, repeated very haltingly, and as if he was thinking about something else, what the Queen had told him to say.'

In the letters exchanged between these people, everything was expressed in a manner that bore the imprint of high breeding, at

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once easy and courteous. Never did a Controller-General 'prescribe', or 'order', or 'forbid'. He recommended, begged, advised. 'I should be obliged to you if . . .' or else, 'You will, Monsieur, recognize how very important. . . .' Or again, 'As you are thoroughly acquainted with the facts of the case, I am confident that you will appreciate better than anyone. . . .' And the Intendant answers: 'You may be assured of the unremitting attention I shall give to this matter. . . .' No hauteur, no servility, not a trace of bureaucratic subordination. It is only by the slightest little turn of phrase in the winding up of the letter, the subtlest little shade, that you can discover which of the two is the superior, and which the inferior. To an intendant of Languedoc who had sent him some official papers, the Controller-General writes, 'I thank you for this further proof of affection.' To another who had been letting the work on the roads get behind, Trudaine only permitted himself to say, 'It was with regret that I made myself aware of the position of the work.' That was enough. Sometimes, in this correspondence, familiar details would creep in. The Monarchy was not carried on by rules, but by men, men who knew and esteemed each other, who worked together and who, between two official communications, would stop to inquire after each other's health, ask how their families were, and how things were going. 'No one, my dear Sir, could be more sensible than I am of the mark of friendship you show me by remembering about the Bordeaux wine. I should like about seven or eight hundred bottles, and I want it good. I rather think, however, we agreed that the big vineyards should be left alone. A sound Médoc, is sometimes a very good thing indeed. I had some at M. Chauvelin's, your father-in-law's, and it was first-rate. I shan't worry too much about the price, so long as I can get hold of something that will please you when you do me the honour to come and see me. I rely entirely on your kindness, as indeed, I should do in matters much more important than this. I have just had your report on Roads and Bridges. . . .' That was Trudaine again, writing to Boutin, intendant at Bordeaux.

Never, in her history, did France possess an administration so wise, so enlightened, so devoted to the public weal, so accessible to the desires of the people. For if the intendant is the King's man, he is the man of his province no less. He had dwelt in it so long that it made part and parcel of his very being. He defended its interests, made himself its advocate and, when occasion arose, protected it against encroachments by the central power. M. Lavissee is fully



justified in writing as he has done, that '*the Intendant is the King present in the Province*'. But this formula has frequently been misunderstood, and many have thought that, like our present-day prefects, the intendant was but a mere representative of the minister in office, that he could not act on his own authority and had no personal power or responsibility. But it was precisely because he was the *King present* as it were in his own person, that he was under no compulsion to refer from day to day to Versailles. The length of time such a process would have taken was enough to rule it out altogether. The very considerable powers conferred upon him, were his to use as he thought fit and without reserve. And he did use them freely, and on his own responsibility. He was not for ever begging for instructions and orders; he acted, took the initiative, went straight ahead, craving and thinking of no other sanction than that of bringing the affair to a successful issue. In Paris, Bertier de Sauvigny, on his own authority, altered the *per capita* assessment to a tax on rents; the personal property quota of the Assemblée Constituante, one of the old four. No doubt the intendants did what they could to curb the power of the local authorities. But those magistracies belonged to little selfish oligarchies whose management of affairs often brought disaster in its train. It was their persistent abuses and malversations that brought upon them the intervention of the government, far more than any preconceived scheme of levelling down. The economic superiority of the *Pays d'Etats* over the *Pays d'Election* is a pure myth. It is true that the States of Languedoc inspired lenders with greater confidence than did the King, but for that, there was a particular reason. It was known that the Revenue Authorities, for fear of trouble, had not exacted from the province the full measure of the contribution for which it was liable and that therefore it had considerable reserves at its disposal. Its credit was based on a breach of the law which time had sanctioned, and not on any superiority in its administrative system. In point of fact, the intendants carefully studied the character of the people under their control, noting their various likes and dislikes. In order to avoid the introduction of road-construction into his department, Pajot, the intendant of Montauban, adduced as the reason for his opposition 'the spirit of the people', 'their disposition to vanity', 'their independence', 'their dislike of anything new'. 'The farther one gets away from Paris towards the mountains,' he wrote on this occasion, 'the less real and effective does obedience become.' The memory of the Camisards was not dead. 'One must know when to shut one's eyes and act

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with caution.' An intendant who had been twenty-five or thirty years in the same province was a power against whom a controller-general would have no great pleasure in pitting himself. On his own appointment to Montauban, young Galaizière made a point of showing his father, Stanislas's old Chancellor, various regulations he proposed to introduce and Galaizière senior corrected, rewrote, cut down and condensed. He expunged a preamble which he considered too pretentious; and he simplified some regulations, which, intended to provide for every possible case, was altogether too complicated even in regard to the most trivial matters. 'You mustn't ask them to fill up too many forms,' he told him. The master was for moderating his disciple's ardour a little. There is nothing like making experience go hand in hand with daring. 'You've not yet earned the right to go so independently to work. Twenty-seven more years in the service, and you'll be more your own master.' The Council replenished itself with extreme slowness. The newcomers became insensibly inoculated with the methods and principles of their seniors. Trudaine, for example, was Intendant of Finance for thirty-five years, and director of Roads and Bridges, twenty-six. Two or three times he refused an appointment as Controller-General and, had it not been for his deafness, he might have been Chancellor instead of Lamoignon. Permanent, homogeneous, unchangeable, the Council met any proposed modifications in home policy with an almost insurmountable resistance. When Laverdy crumpled up before the Parlements, the Council countered with every species of objection, evasion and deliberate procrastination. The permanent departmental heads who surrounded the Controller brought continual pressure to bear on him and steadily indoctrinated him with their ideas. Little by little he endeavoured to recover on the quiet, the concessions he had yielded in public. In a declaration dated 1768, he openly returned to the system of the *taille tarifée* which was in keeping with the equalitarian tradition of his predecessors.

It would be interesting to get behind the scenes in a government office and to see the staff at work – the group of clerks and permanent officials who assisted Maurepas, let us say, or Choiseul or Praslin. It is some years ago now since M. Frédéric Masson brought the senior clerks of the Foreign Office on the stage for us to see; and M. Albert Duchêne has done some similar work in regard to the Colonial Office. Let us hope that the other departments will be as lucky. These senior clerkships were, as a matter of fact, very honourable posts and were very much sought after. A liberal salary of 15,000

to 25,000 livres, the prospect of a handsome pension, elastic powers and privileges which no one haggled about, no one above you except the minister, the chance of associating your name with some memorable achievement, direct and personal relations with the King; there was a good deal in all that to tempt an ambitious man whom circumstances prevented from playing a part in the forefront of the stage. These senior men kept their posts for a long time. It was no uncommon thing to see one man at the head of the same office for twenty years or more. There was no hard and fast rule about the way they got promotion. They were picked out because they had shown ability and attracted favourable attention in some subordinate post or other. They were middle-class people, military men, abbés, or needy noblemen. The Monarchy lavished favours upon them. Those we know about, were worthy of them.

Let us pause a moment. In all this survey of the forces recruited for his service by the King, we have not yet come across a single Civil Servant in the present-day sense of the word. The 'officers' who owned their berths were not Civil Servants, nor were the Intendants, sent into the provinces on some temporary commission which was always liable to be withdrawn, nor again were the clerks composing the staff of the central offices, whose powers were not clearly defined and who had no settled scale of promotion. All the same it was Louis the Fifteenth who created 'Monsieur Lebureau'. That legendary celebrity must not be robbed of his letters-patent. It was not Bonaparte who created him. He was born round about 1750, without his *rond de cuir* and his lustring cuff-protectors. On the contrary, he wore an embroidered coat, silk stockings and a sword. Truth to tell, the event passed quite unnoticed; and yet it was something like a revolution, the prelude to a new order of things, the prefiguration of the modern State. But you can see in it all, to the very life, how the transformation of the old monarchical regime came about; noiselessly, smoothly, evenly, without any preconceived theory, under the impact of practical experience.

In proportion as their task became more arduous, the intendants had got together as best they could, a little nucleus of specialist collaborators. To start with they availed themselves of local talent; men of law, advocates, borough-magistrates, whom they made sub-delegates or, as we should say, sub-prefects, secretaries-general, directors or controllers of the *Vingtième*. Very much like fish out of water to begin with, awkward, unaccustomed to the work and completely under the thumb of the Intendant, they gradually

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gained confidence and found their feet. But if they succeeded pretty well in tasks which merely called for application, common sense and tenacity, they were totally devoid of scientific knowledge.

So long as road-construction, for example, had merely consisted in filling up ruts with bundles of wood and gravel, the attainments of a convent architect, or the village building-contractor had amply sufficed to meet the case. But Louis the Fifteenth it was who created the great network of French highways. Every year the peasants were compelled to put in five or six days' work on the roads. That was Crown labour, a tax in kind, which financial crises were powerless to suspend. In twenty-five years, ten thousand leagues of roadway were opened up on plain and mountain. Dams, reservoirs, canals, paving, metalling, bridges, drainage-schemes, improving the accessibility of towns, vast labours were entered upon everywhere simultaneously, and, everywhere, engineers were in demand to carry them on.

In 1744, Trudaine (it is always Trudaine) created a draughtsman's department, which was soon filled to overflowing. He added a map section which, in turn, soon proved inadequate. At last, in 1747, he created a training-school, and put in charge of it an engineer named Perronet who was afterwards responsible for the Pont de la Concorde and the Pont de Neuilly. In 1750 the Corporation of Roads and Bridges was granted a charter. This all-important document holds good in all essential points to this day. At the bottom of the edifice, was the school; at the top, the intendant-director, the first engineer, and the four inspectors-general, forming the higher council; then came the head of the map department, the engineers-in-chief, one to each district, and, lastly, the sub-engineers chosen from among the pupils of the training-school at the expiration of their three years' course. The pupils' appointments were competitive and the subjects were, elucidation of problems written and oral, in geometry, trigonometry, land-surveying, draughtsmanship, mechanics, hydraulics, stone-cutting, timber-work and architecture, on the Blondel method. The salaries were 2,400 livres for the engineers-in-chief, 8,000 for the senior engineer. In addition, there were bonuses, travelling expenses, and office charges. Here we have the earliest incarnation of the Civil Servant proper; he who neither buys his job for cash, nor owes it to somebody or other's good pleasure. He wins it by battling with his peers, his rival candidates. He is licked into shape in the State school, he goes up the ladder, rung by rung, according to immutable rules of promotion. This was

an immense innovation which, in half a century, gave an entirely new meaning to the words *public service*. Henceforth, it was a profession, no longer a magistracy, or a delegation.

Taking the *Ponts et Chaussées* as his model, Trudaine instituted the Corporation of Mines, which M. Marcel Rouff has made the object of a special study. An Order in Council of 1744 drew up the regulations governing the concession of mining rights, which still remain in force. It was a prodigiously bold measure because it took away all underground rights from the landowners and transferred them to the nation as represented by the King! Bertin appointed the first inspector-general and the School of Mines was opened in 1783. But traditions live on. 'In carefully investigating how men like Trudaine, Bertin, Joly de Fleury, Laboullaye, Tolozan, discharged their public duties,' writes M. Rouff, 'and in reading through the reports of men like Jars and Dietrich, I have never come across anything save a sincere endeavour to serve the higher aims of justice, and a desire to display perfect impartiality in the interests of the common weal, nothing but an anxiety to create firm and profitable concessions and the resolve to give the country its full due in respect of the products yielded by its coal supplies. The men whose names we have just cited were the veritable founders of the mining industry in France. . . . The diaries, reports and memoranda of the inspector-general Jars are models of their kind. So far from affecting a ponderous or pedantic tone, they read like a straightforward narrative, simple, interesting and sincere, but singularly penetrating and far-sighted. Jars had a methodical and seeing eye. He was quick to seize the major outlines and, at the same time, to note the minor details. If aught was hidden from him, he divined it. The clarity of his statements was neither dimmed nor overcharged by the abundance of his information. The soundness of his counsel and advice springs from a luminous understanding, and one that was completely master of its subject. The assay-work which he attempted was performed with a scientific exactitude that inspired unwavering confidence. His mind was too inventive to permit him to be content with going along the beaten track, and he devised, on the spot, methods of testing and exploitation which he describes with the modesty that informs all his writings and all his acts. He never showed the smallest desire to draw attention to himself. There was nothing but bore witness to his single-hearted and passionate devotion to duty. . . . No considerations of personal interest ever rubbed the bloom off his free and independent judgment.' Brilliant

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as this portrait is, it lacks one thing. Louis the Fifteenth's Civil Servants possessed an innate sense of greatness. An engineer would see to it that his roads were firm and well-made; but he would have them stately, as well, broad and straight, and bordered with fine trees. And when someone proposed that he should introduce a curve out of all harmony with its onward sweep, he would reply indignantly that such a humiliation would mar the dignity of the King's highway, and, moreover, that 'it would permanently subvert the most elementary notions of public order'.

The ball was set rolling, and it was to go on rolling till the end of the reign and all through the days of Louis the Sixteenth. Round about the central authority, there came into being, restored or newly-created, all the great departments which go to form the structure of the modern State: Taxation, excise, registration, land, mortgages, postal-service, rivers and forests, agriculture together with veterinary colleges, stud-farms and stock-raising, record office, fisheries, ordnance-survey, gunpowder monopoly. In 1776, Maurepas, who had been restored to favour, founded the *Caisse d'Escompte*, or Discount Bank, with a capital of fifteen millions, afterwards increased to a hundred. This institution undertook the negotiation of drafts and bills of exchange, dealt in gold and silver bullion, issued notes covered by an adequate metal reserve. The Bank was brought to ruin by the Revolution. It was the ancestor of our Banque de France.

From the downfall of Louis the Sixteenth to the *Coup d'état* of the 18th Brumaire, is only a matter of seven years. A number of well-meaning history-books express astonishment that Bonaparte should have managed to organize his Direct Taxes Department in ten days. Well, what of it? All he had to do was to call up the *personnel* of the Old Regime. Where his merit comes in, is in choosing for his Finance Minister a man who knew the working of his destined department from A to Z. Gaudin was born in 1756; he had made his début in 1773, under M. d'Ormesson, in the Office of Taxes presided over by M. d'Ailly. His first act was to revive the departments with which he had formerly been connected. 'For the compilation of registers,' he wrote in his memoirs, 'the revolution had brought into being a swarm of overseers whose duty it was to inspect and expedite the work of the Communes. . . . My proposal was that this superfluous and costly army should be demobilized. It was replaced by a general manager's department, *on all fours with what was formerly the Chief Inspector of Taxes Department.*' The italics are his. Gaudin's

case is far from being unique. Daru, who was military administrator under Napoleon, had been Commissioner for War and Army Intendant under Louis the Sixteenth. The same men reappear in the various levels of the government hierarchy. M. Foucher, for example, has published a very interesting series of letters that passed between François Ladoucette, the Chief Prefect of the Isère, and Caze de la Bove, the last of the intendants of the Dauphiny, who had now become Director of Military Hospitals. Caze de la Bove replies at great length to the questions put to him by his successor, puts him *au courant* with the requirements of his department, and lavishly peppers him with bits of advice from one who has a thorough acquaintance with the locality. If you took the trouble to turn up the Almanach, you might come across hundreds of prefects, sub-prefects, engineers, district-managers, tax-collectors, treasurers who, across the gulf of the Reign of Terror, had gathered up the threads of the Old Regime and its administrative traditions.

It was the reign of Louis the Fifteenth that was the golden age of French administrative achievement. Her public services had not yet been drilled and dragooned into a quasi-military bureaucracy where a man cannot call his soul his own. The pervading spirit was neither pedantic nor sullen, but adaptable, full of life, courteous, accessible. Despite 'advanced' clubs and a retrograde magistracy, despite too, the criticisms levelled at it on every side, the difficulties unnumbered which it had to overcome, lost in a wilderness of complicated and worn-out institutions, it had the supreme merit of being a success. It was no distressful country over which Louis the Fifteenth reigned, but a France in the plenitude of prosperity.

Chocolate-box pretty-pretties, sighs and languors, mincing abbés, billets-doux, boudoir depravities! Empty heads and shallow hearts! No; the age was a greater one than that. It was an age of husbandry, or men of affairs, of iron-founders, of dealers on 'Change, of ships and shipbuilders, and slave-traders. There was vice, we know, but it was vice without hypocrisy. Alceste and Tartuffe had been happily interred; Werther, René, Chatterton and Rolla were as yet unborn. The vogue of the sermon was over; tears were not yet in fashion. Men and women knew the art of living, and they practised it.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE PLEASURES AND DANGERS OF BEING RICH

IF we except a few foodstuffs and textile materials of exotic origin, French commerce, in the old days, was purely local. Humble craftsmen working in their homes, under the eyes of the passers by, themselves became the vendors of their own handiwork. They were careful to adapt their labours to the tastes and requirements of their customers, with which, as was to be expected of neighbours, they were thoroughly well acquainted. At certain fixed periods of the year, important fairs were held in Paris, Lyons, Troyes, Beaucaire and Guibray, and there the public were able to lay in a stock of whatever they were unable to obtain in their own town or village. For lack of fresh markets, for lack too of good roads and rapid transport, consumption remained pretty stationary. For fear of overstocking the market, work was so organized as to keep production within bounds. The Corporations restricted the number of master-craftsmen, and not only set their faces against 'combines', branch establishments and 'cornering' tactics, but discouraged all individual initiative. Moreover, in order that everybody should have a fair field and no favour, they compelled their members to obey the same rules and to employ the same processes. The desire to secure fairness and uniformity of conditions was held to be of greater importance to the craft than the stimulus of competition; quality was put before quantity, and perfection of finish, before number and speed. The 'companions' thus organized into guilds benefited enormously from the power and prestige which association imparts to all human units. Discipline and *esprit de corps* did their share in lending stability to the social order and in bringing it prosperity. Moreover, regarding as it did the pursuit of the various crafts as a branch of the public service, the State would never have admitted the right of a master to pile up unlimited wealth at the expense of his fellow-citizens. The Christian idea of the just hire was still the basic inspiration of its economic policy. For this reason it took stern measures to ensure, not only that the quality of the goods offered for sale was up to standard, but that the prices asked should conform to a rate which should be fair to workman, master and customer alike.



The voyages of the great navigators, the discovery of America, the birth of vast colonial empires, shook this system to its foundations. Opportunities of making a fortune presented themselves on every side, and the 'Corporation' was found to be altogether too confined and too crabbed a framework for such soaring ambitions. True, the Corporation had received and handed on from generation to generation the cunning secrets of the handicraft, but, in the process, it had not failed to acquire those defects from which monopolies too often suffer, namely, egoism, rigidity, narrow-mindedness, a mania for red-tape regulations and a rooted antipathy to change, whether for good or ill. This took them to great lengths. The gingerbread makers, for example, could only sell their produce in rounds or squares, or in the form of little hearts or marbles; to make it up into little men, or little pigs, was a punishable offence. Was it then the right thing to do, to pick a quarrel with the wards, to imperil the peace of society, to sacrifice proven benefits, for the sake of a highly problematic gain? Perish a thought so foolish! But then, on the other hand, was *France going to cut herself off from the rest of the world, fall from her high estate, live solely on the past, shut off from progress by the high walls of an effete tradition?* The Monarchy hit on a solution of the dilemma which postponed the struggle for a century. In the very heart of the corporative system, it created autonomous zones, islets of liberty, wherein were installed industries which the older despotisms would have strangled at birth; these were the 'royal manufactures'. The older crafts continued to live under the same governance as heretofore. Because they required different materials to work on, and a different organization, the newer industries were allowed their freedom. Thus there grew up the trade in glass, in silk hosiery, lace and tin.

But in the eighteenth century, this compromise was fated to be blown sky-high. It is incontestable that under Louis the Fifteenth the population of France showed a large and continuous increase. What the exact figures were, we do not know. Periodical census-taking had not yet come into fashion, and if the system of national registration had been organized in all its details in 1759 by the ordinance of Blois, the curés who were supposed to carry it out, had performed their task in a decidedly slipshod manner. In spite of minute and frequently reiterated instructions, their registers were often in a state of hopeless muddle. In a highly commendable study of the town of Quercy, the Abbé Sol cites numerous examples of carelessness and wilful neglect, pages ripped out, registers lost,

signatures omitted, copies not lodged at the record-office, and what not. Nevertheless, by comparing the approximate lists drawn up by Necker in 1783, the valuations carried out in 1788 for the purposes of the meeting of the States General, the electoral register compiled in 1791 and 1793, and the number of bread cards served out to the rationed towns in the second and third years of the Republic, we arrive at a total of twenty-seven million inhabitants in 1789, as against eighteen or nineteen million in 1700. This population, the densest in Europe, was stable and homogeneous. It found plenty to do. People did not emigrate and, as a general rule, work was so abundant that, in the seaports and in Paris, foreign labour had to be pressed into the service.

The creation of the great road-system notably accelerated the pulse of economic life. The postal service was speeded up and made more regular. People went about more; travelling was both quicker and cheaper. Goods, which had hitherto been carried along vague and difficult tracks, were now loaded on to wagons which rolled on with their freight through light and darkness to their far-off destination. The transport of coal from Rive-de-Gier to Lyons, kept seven hundred animals continuously in harness. In the department of Haute Vienne alone, on the roads from Paris to Bordeaux, and Paris to Toulouse, there were in commission, at the time the Revolution broke out, five thousand wagons and twenty thousand horses. Most significant of all: goods no longer always travelled in the same direction, from country to town. The peasants now did a lot of buying. Instead of jogging homeward, perched up on the box-seat of their empty wagons, the drivers came back to the village with a consignment of linen, ironmongery, hats, household utensils and other merchandise. This 'return freight' enabled them to lower their rates. While prices for commodities were going up all round, transport became cheaper, and cheap transport was another thing that was good for trade.

According to statistics drawn up by the staff of the Controller-General, the country's foreign trade was quadrupled between 1715 and 1787. By the eve of the Revolution, it had reached the enormous figure of 1,153 millions, which it was not destined to touch again till 1825. Imported commodities from tropical and sub-tropical regions represented fifteen millions in 1718; in 1787, they worked out at fifty-two millions, a convincing proof of the prosperity of the West Indies. The six millions foreign goods re-exported in 1716, had increased to fifty-two millions in 1787, conclusive evidence that our

Mercantile Marine was not contenting itself with merely carrying French goods but was competing successfully with the merchant fleets of other nations. The year 1783 saw the inauguration of the first regular service of packets between Le Havre and New York. The two great ports on the Atlantic, Bordeaux and Nantes, became places of international importance and centres for the storage, negotiation and distribution of the principal colonial products. The sugar imported from San Domingo represented fifty per cent of the total world consumption; in a single year the shipowners of Nantes exported thither no less than 30,000 negroes. To-day, with our excessive and reckless production, the almost insurmountable difficulty is to discover, and to keep on discovering, fresh outlets for our huge and everlastingly renewed accumulations of goods. In the eighteenth century, it was all the other way; demand preceded supply and was in excess of it. The customers were in the majority, orders were awaiting for execution. It was the traders who besieged the manufacturers to get the goods for which the purchaser was already clamouring. So far from discouraging production, they did their best to promote it. They were always urging the importance of perfecting the plant, of building new factories, and, particularly, the need for putting an end to the trade corporations, because they interfered with competition and hampered the concentration of capital. It was the wholesale merchants who were the agents of the industrial revolution, and that revolution was directed against the trade corporations, and in their despite.

By another equally paradoxical turn of events, it was the country that was the first to be won over, and capitalism made use of the country to bring the urban centres to their knees. The Corporations possessed no authority save in their own respective towns. There was no system of provincial or national federation to link them up with the rural districts, or with each other; the country was outside their sphere of influence. Now, from time immemorial, peasants have occupied the winter months and the long evenings, when they had nothing else to do, with spinning, weaving, cutlery work, pottery and carpentry. The wholesalers having got hold of all this scattered army of workers by holding out the bait of bigger profits, made them work not only for the home trade in general, but for the markets overseas. The rural workman was furnished by them with the raw material necessary for his work, as well as with tools of the latest pattern, and up-to-date looms. In Flanders, Picardy, Champagne and Upper Normandy, villages and hamlets were

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perpetually being combed by representatives who distributed orders, brought along patterns and designs, collected and paid for the finished articles. The farmer and the farm-hand went on working at home, when they had a mind to, and when they were not wanted for work in the fields. All the same, they were but the paid 'hands' of an employer, the wage-earners of a 'concern' which was quite out of their line, on whose managers they had never set eyes, and as to whose other activities they were completely in the dark. Only let these employers cast off the yoke of corporate control, and, with a view to economy on transport, gather together workmen and machinery in a few buildings, and modern industrialism is born, and with it, the modern proletariat. Such was the origin of the great cloth and cotton works at Sedan, Amiens, Rouen, Rheims, Louviers, Mulhouse, and Orleans.

At Lyons, where, originally, the silk industry was not vested in a corporation, the master-traders quickly got the upper hand of the master-craftsmen. Before long they suppressed their liberties and reduced them to the level of mere wage-earners. And so, by the middle of the century, we see employers and employed pitted against each other as enemies. Strikes occurred in 1744, 1752, 1778 and 1786. The strike of 1744 involved fifteen thousand silk workers who dragged in five thousand dyers, chaussiers, carpenters and carriers. The workers who refused to join in the strike were hooted, maltreated and forced to pay a fine to the strikers. Processions of men of threatening aspect went marching through the streets. After putting up a faint show of resistance, the authorities, swept off their feet, gave their sanction to the terms of the contract demanded by the ringleaders. It was not until a whole year had passed that they considered themselves strong enough to take proceedings against the rioters.

There used to be no uniformity about French government institutions and policy in the old days. Unlike the modern regimes, which pride themselves on referring all their actions to a single predominant idea, the monarchy was only too ready to submit to circumstances and to substitute expediency for principle. Things established themselves insensibly, as the circumstances of the time called them into being. They long outlived the causes which created them, nor did they die out as the result of any formal decree, but perished rather of old age and lack of vital energy. For a strictly logical mind, the labour conditions, at the end of the reign of Louis the Fifteenth were, incontestably, of a terribly complicated nature.

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The corporative system was still in existence, but there were so many holes in it, that it could stop nothing that was rich enough in future potentialities to give it the go-by. The Inspectors of Commerce continued to apply the time-honoured rules; the Government clung to them as offering a guarantee for the maintenance of social order, but, simultaneously, by dint of derogations from the strict letter, made them more elastic and brought them more into harmony with the spirit of the times. Of course, from the lofty standpoint of pure reason, it is easy to criticize this empirical and opportunistic policy; nevertheless there is this to be said in its favour, that, while it spared the country the shock of any violent changes, it did not condemn it to stagnation.

From 1750 onwards, the age was borne irresistibly along by a wave of prosperity. From England there poured in a torrent of new processes and new inventions, the flying shuttle, the spinning machine, the mechanical loom, the cylindrical calander, the twisting machine, the hot-press, the coke smelter, the steam engine, the paper mill, the rolling-mill, and the first mechanical tool. The Government extended inducements to foreign builders to come to France, and made naturalized Frenchmen of them. There was abundance of capital; trade was brisk, the credit system was extended, big fortunes were built up. Almost every branch of industry came into being, printed calicoes, cottons, coal-mining, metallurgical works, soap factories, glass works, refining, chemical works, munitions – never were known such prosperous times. Every kind of trading association with which we are familiar to-day was a commonplace of the times. Big men and little, gentle and simple, pooled their resources. A marquis could not have opened a shop, or set up as a draper without losing caste; but he could quite well sell tallow dips, or coal, or women's underwear, when his identity was discreetly veiled by the anonymity of a limited liability company. Anzin and Aniche were in the hands of two such companies, and the founder of one of them was the Prince de Croy. The Duc de Charosté exploited the Roche Molière; the Marquis de Balleroy, Littry; the Duc de Chaulnes, Montrelais; the Prince de Conti, Maréchal de Castries and Tubeuf, la Grande Combe. The Comte d'Artois and the Duc d'Orléans had holdings in the chemical works at Javel (eau de javel) and at Saint Denis (soda).

The modern captain of industry, who plays with millions and employs hundreds of hands, existed well before the Revolution. Nay more, he had by that time already taken root and founded

dynasties. There was Dollfus at Thann, Perref at Lyons, Drouhin at Belleville, de Wendel at Hayange and le Creusot, Oberkampf at Jouy. Then, also, there was the inventor class; the skilled artificer, such as Tacquard; the builder and accomplished mathematician like Vaucanson, or Cugnot, or Jouffray d'Abbans; the research man, the man of the laboratory, like Berthollet, and Leblanc and the disciples of Lavoisier. Under Louis the Fourteenth, France had boasted but one 'Bourse', and that was at Lyons. A Bourse was opened in Paris in Law's time; but it died with him. In 1724 it was restarted. Its hours of business were from ten o'clock in the morning till one in the afternoon. All the usual departments of a stock exchange were there. You could speculate on exchange rates, in government stock, in taxation bonds, in the shares of the leading companies, such as the India Company, Marine Insurance, Paris Water Supply, General Assurance. According to Necker, one half of the total quantity of metal currency in Europe was at that time held in France.

At no other time did economic problems provoke such widespread interest. Five or six reviews dealt exclusively with such matters: *la Gazette de Commerce*, *le Journal de L'Agriculture*, *les Ephémérides du Citoyen*, *le Journal Economique*, *le Journal du Commerce*, *les Nouvelles Ephémérides*. The *Journal du Commerce* and the *Ephémérides* were the strongholds of the Physiocrats; the former was a monthly, the latter a quarterly, with supplements. Manures and fertilisers, the rotation of crops, State Labour, artificial fodder, circulation of grain crops, intensive culture, communal grazing – these and their like were the subjects that were all the rage, alike with readers and editors. The *Gazette du Commerce* consisted of eight pages and appeared twice weekly. Page one was given over to correspondence from the country and abroad, the remainder was taken up with Stock Exchange quotations, market-prices, statistics, and shipping intelligence. It included a very full analysis of English publications. The *Journal Economique*, still more specialized, was stuffed full of scientific reports and specifications of machinery. On January 1st, 1767, a General Correspondence Bureau, with agents in the very smallest towns, began its activities. It was at once an information bureau, a book-mart and an agency for house property and real estate. It kept its subscribers informed of all public events, conferences and ceremonies, new books, edicts, ordinances and regulations, as and when they were promulgated, market-prices, lists of articles lost and found, estates and manorial properties for disposal, house-property

for investment, country mansions, legal and other practices for sale or exchange, and a list of births, marriages and deaths. It also undertook to watch proceedings in the courts, to secure settlement of outstanding accounts, to cash coupons and banker's drafts, and to collect rents. Trade publicity made its appearance with the *Petites Affiches*, in which appeared the earliest announcements of sales of surplus stock.

The transformation that took place in the industrial sphere is plain even to the most casual observer. Not so easy to discern and to follow are the revolutionary changes that took place in agricultural methods and customs, though these present an equal, and to the Frenchman, perhaps, an even greater, interest. Just as the phrase 'industrial revolution' has been applied to the birth of capitalistic industrialism, so also the term 'agricultural revolution' has been given to the introduction of certain methods of land cultivation which have survived to our own day. That the changes which took place in these seemingly distinct spheres, were not unrelated, were indeed closely interdependent, is a truth that can hardly be called in question. The word *revolution* lays a stress on the amplitude and intensity of the phenomenon. Nevertheless, if the industrial revolution was but the somewhat precipitate *dénouement* of a process which had been germinating out of sight for two hundred years, so also the revolution in farming was certainly not the outcome of some sudden change of ideas, was certainly no violent upheaval unaccountably shattering the calm of centuries of contented and unsuspecting immobility. It took several decades to complete the transformation, and nowhere was the process applied with more gentle and leisurely deliberation than it was in France.

As M. Marc Bloc states in his admirable book, *Les Caractères Originaux de l'Histoire Rurale*, the rural districts of France make up a large complex country, which unites within its frontiers and beneath the same harmonious tonality, the deep-rooted remains of two conflicting agrarian civilisations. Fields in long, unenclosed strips round about the big villages of Lorraine, the homesteads and hamlets of Brittany, the villages of Provence, each resembling nothing so much as the acropolis of some city of ancient Greece, the strangely assorted shapes and sizes of the fields in Languedoc and the Berry – all these different pictures are but the outward manifestations of very ancient and very profound contrasts in the habits and disposition of the human race. Yet there is one word

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that restores the shattered unity, an old word, a word indigenous, not borrowed from the Latin, but most probably Gallic, like *charrue* (plough) *chemin* (road, way) and that is the word *blé* (wheat, corn). For us to-day, *blé* means wheat, and wheat alone. It was not always so. In the language spoken by the peasants in days gone by, it served to denote any kind of grain that could be made into bread, whether it produced the fair, white bread which adorns the rich man's table, or that which goes by the name of black bread, heavy with different sorts of meal; wheat, rye, meslin (a mixture of wheat and rye), spelt, oats and even barley. Wheat, in this sense, occupied the greater part of the land under cultivation. It was even persuaded to grow on soil that might have been thought hopeless for crops; in the Alps and Limousin; on dry and rocky declivities; in Normandy and Brittany, on rain-drenched ground that seemed foredestined for pasturage. After the discovery of America, maize did indeed, find a congenial home in the moist, warm folds of our sheltered valleys; and, in the sixteenth century, buckwheat on the poorest ground, ousted the former crops of rye and meslin. But, at the opening of the eighteenth century, it would still have been true to say that everybody aimed at having, at his very door, the wherewithal to feed himself and those dependent on him. Moreover, for fear of famine, the Government exercised a sharp control over the circulation of wheat. If it thought necessary, it would prohibit one province from selling to another, and, at the smallest hint of a shortage, it hurriedly collected enormous stocks to ensure the food-supply of Paris and the larger towns.

The construction of the great road-system brought about conditions favourable to the circulation of merchandise and consequently to specialization in crops. But to secure the prevalence of a system of commercial interchange people must develop what M. Bloch calls a buying and selling mentality. It was necessary that wheat, for example, should be regarded not only as a prime necessity from the food point of view, but also as a commodity suitable to form the basis of commercial and speculative transactions; in short, the farmer would have to strike out a new line for himself and become not merely an expert in crop-growing, but a trader. Here again, the initiators were the new-comers among the landed proprietors, the new-rich, wealthy *bourgeois*, men with plenty of money, whom business on a large scale had accustomed to look about them and to take the long view. Influenced by the 'physiocrats', the Government encouraged these traders, always reserving the right, however, to revive



the old regulations, if bad times required it. Thus, in 1763, in terms of a declaration dated May 25th, Bertin granted permission for the unrestricted circulation of corn and meal within the realm, even going so far as to exempt the wagoners from toll-dues. In 1764, Laverdy made it lawful to export corn, first from twenty-seven, and subsequently from thirty-six ports, but with the proviso that a food zone should be reserved for Paris, and that the frontier should close again automatically, as soon as the price touched 12 livres 10 sols the bushel. Three indifferent harvests in three successive years, 1766, 1767 and 1768, compelled Controller-General Terray, to rescind the measures of his predecessors. On July 16th, 1770, the export of wheat was prohibited, and before long the price of bread went down. In 1774, the door was opened again, and freedom of export restored.

Over a period of four years, France had disposed, in foreign markets, of 4,308,000 bushels of wheat and rye, representing, in round figures, about fifty million livres in value. That trade on this immense scale could have been carried on quite normally shows how enormously the production of cereals had gone up since the beginning of the reign. Nevertheless no very great additional acreage had been put under the plough. True, companies had been formed to finance various schemes for reclaiming of marsh lands; true also that official encouragement had been given to the clearing of waste lands, but when all was said and done, they were a long way behind what the Middle Ages had achieved. A few moors and sandy tracts had been brought under cultivation, notably in Brittany and Guienne; some large stretches had been drained (like that belonging to the Duc de Penthièvre at Lamballe), and some fresh development work had been started, but no new villages had sprung up, and the sum-total showed no very remarkable increase. The salient achievement of the 'agricultural revolution' was not the extension of the arable area by putting fresh land under cultivation, but the abolition of the periodic fallow and the consequent augmentation of the productiveness of the already existing tillage.

In the old days, agriculturists had perceived that land, unless it was heavily manured, had need, at certain regularly recurring times, of rest; that is to say that to prevent the soil from becoming exhausted it was necessary, not only to vary the crop, but also, in certain years, to suspend cultivation altogether. In the eighteenth century, those parts of the country where the soil was poor, still practised this system of intermittent cultivation. One day the

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farmer would bring along a plough, mark out a piece of waste land, clear it of scrub and roots, till it and finally sow it. For four or five years in succession it would bear a crop. Not until the poverty of the yield made it plain that the ground was exhausted, was it suffered to go out of cultivation and to relapse into scrub and bracken. Then cattle were put out to graze upon it, and the plough was taken elsewhere. After some considerable time, it was cleared and broken once more, and so the cycle began again. That was the most primitive method, but, after a time, someone conceived the idea of substituting, for this rough and ready system, the plan of regularly ringing the changes on a certain series of crops, in other words various schemes of crop rotation came into vogue. Different as they were in detail, they all had one thing in common; they all recognized the necessity of giving the ground a periodical and thorough rest: in the south it was every two years, in the other parts of the country, every three. In Brittany and Normandy, where the fields are shut in by hedges, every farmer could please himself as to what he planted and when he planted it, now letting a field lie fallow, now putting in winter wheat, spring wheat, or rye, or root crops as he thought best. But everywhere else the fields were unenclosed. Sometimes they ran in long narrow strips; sometimes they were parcelled out in a sort of complicated mosaic. Now, this parcelling out often reached a point when the independent working of the separate plots became a sheer impossibility. Owing to the lack of working space, roads and fences, it was necessary, in order to carry out the work of cultivation, to deal with the fields in groups, each group keeping to its own particular system of crop rotation. Thus sowing and reaping, and all the major activities that make up the farmer's year, were carried out by each group, at the chosen time, as custom and the owners might determine. And then, when the harvest was over, and the fallow year had come round again, the land went out of cultivation and became once more, in a certain sort, a piece of common property; herds grazed there at their pleasure, either in separate groups, or in a single group under the eye of the communal herdsman. This was what was known as *la vaine pâture*, the right of free pasturage on fallow land. It extended to grass-lands after the first hay-harvest, the second crop being thus lost to the owner. Furthermore, it frequently happened that the parish, in its corporate capacity, had proprietary rights over moors, woods and meadows. Everybody could enjoy the usufruct of them, free of all rent and charges. In a word, more than half of rural

France was under a regime which, if not communist, was, at all events, communal.

But the outstanding achievement of the century was the abolition of what François de Neufchâteau called 'the curse of the fallow'. No more lying idle, thenceforward, for ground that had been used to doing nothing one year out of two, or one year out of three. Instead of letting it lie fallow, between the two corn harvests, the expert agriculturist would henceforth plant it with different vegetables designed to probe the marrow of the soil at different depths, or to vary the demands made upon its chemical content. First of all came rotations of leguminous crops, such as clover, sainfoin or lucerne; then, at the end of the century, potatoes and turnips, and finally, under the Empire, the sugar-beet. When people began to abandon the old fallow idea, they still preserved the biennial or triennial rhythm; but, after a while, it was perceived that better results were obtained by letting the different crops develop freely for one or two successive seasons. Beds of soil were artificially built up and their productivity submitted to experiment, and so, by dint of putting one theory and another to the practical test, they succeeded in prolonging the cycles and making them at once more elastic and more profitable. In drawing a picture of this 'frivolous' eighteenth century, was it, you may ask, really incumbent on one to give so much space to crops and cattle? The fact is, that in human life, materially considered, no line of progress was ever attended by more important consequences. With agricultural production increased a hundred per cent by these new processes of cultivation, the spectre of famine was for ever banished; and increased prosperity, a larger population, urban concentration and industrial development were all simultaneously made possible. Had it not been for this triumphant discovery, the travail of the age would have been barren of result. It is probable that the first experiments in crop-rotation as applied to fodder, were simultaneously devised and put into practice by the agriculturists of Lombardy and Brabant. They were next taken up in England, and from there, but after a long delay, they made their way over to France. It was not until 1760 that Duhamel du Monceau gave, in his *Eléments d'Agriculture*, anything approaching a scientific account of them. The transformation of the countryside was not a spontaneous process. It was the achievement of the Monarchical government, and it took twenty years of hard work to bring it about, twenty years during which practical men and theorists, chemists and savants, were continually

comparing notes, twenty years which witnessed the formation of various agricultural societies, with periodical competitions, and medals for the successful entrants, not to mention free distributions of seeds and plants, the creation of nurseries, tax-exemption granted in respect of land put under the plough or rendered fit for cultivation, slaughter of wolves and wild boars, protective measures against cattle-disease, purchase in foreign markets of animals for stud purposes: there was, in short, no form of activity for the encouragement of agriculture to which the government failed to address itself. Model stock-farms were set going; long-coated sheep imported from Spain, goats from Angora, horses from Algeria, milch-cows from Switzerland and Holland.

To show how utterly behindhand our notions of horse-breeding had hitherto been, it is only necessary to recall the fact that of the three ancestors of the English racing thoroughbred, one, *The Godolphin Arabian*, was a Barbary horse which had been presented to Louis the Fifteenth by the Bey of Tunis. The gentlemen of the Royal Stables failing to be impressed by his exceptional qualities, sold him to a water-carrier, and the water-carrier, in turn, passed him on to an Englishman. When he was seven, he found his way to Godolphin's Stud-Farm where, by the mare Roxana, he had a wonderful colt named Lath. The most famous of his descendants was Eclipse, who made his *début* at Epsom in 1769 and was never beaten. But while the English were thus experimenting with Barbary and Arab stock, modified by climate, exercise, care and speed trials, the French, at least since Cobbert's day, had been in possession, particularly in Limousin, Auvergne and the south, of materials no less promising to work on, and still more abundant. But they did not make the same use of it. While their English neighbours were riding hard-a-gallop in the open air, they were prancing, caracolling and curvetting in their dandified riding-schools. At last, however, in 1763, Bertin started the Pompadour stables for breeding Arab thoroughbreds; the Prince de Lambesc, the chief equerry, reorganized, or restarted the Normandy stud-farms, while the Comte d'Artois inaugurated race-meetings on the Plaine des Sablons and, subsequently, at Longchamp. The first veterinary school was opened at Lyons in 1761, under the management of Bourgelat, the second at Alfort, in 1765. Young, who came to inspect it, noted a large dissecting-room, several laboratories, anatomical collections and a model farm for experiments in cross-breeding and acclimatization.

Thus the land became fashionable again. Noble lords said good-bye to Court life and went back to the country to look after their farms. A certain Duke of La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt bragged tremendously about his splendid cattle and his no less splendid harvests. In a declaration dated 1763, Louis the Fifteenth proclaimed that the men who tilled the soil were the very salt of his kingdom. Buffon, du Tillet, Quesnay, Duhamel du Monceau kept him posted from day to day about farms and farming, and, on several occasions, he dipped into his own privy purse to provide them with the wherewithal to carry on the good work. But, as an outcome of this movement, the economists began to elaborate some high and mighty theory of intensive production. They were in love with 'rationalization' these theorists, and they denounced as so much out-of-date Gothic lumber, all the old agricultural customs, because, by restricting the right to hold property, they barred the way to progress. The physiocrats clamoured for the abolition of these servile obligations, just as the liberals clamoured for the abolition of the guilds. In the town, as in the country, it was the problem of the proletariat, in all its stark and brutal crudity, that the onward march of science was bringing to the fore.

Ever since Loutchisky carried out his great investigations, the distribution of rural property in the pre-Revolution days, had formed the subject of a number of monographs. One after another, the districts of Sens and Bar-le-Duc, the department of le Nord, the Vire country, the bailiwick of Auxerre, the districts round Toulouse, Saint Gaudens, Rennes, Fougères and Vitré had been studied by various first-rate and most learned investigators, who usefully supplemented, and, generally speaking, confirmed, Loutchisky's more ambitious labours. It is now established beyond all cavil, that, in 1789, the privileged classes owned no more than half the total agricultural land area, if so much. Furthermore, that half included moorland and marsh, as well as purely ornamental park land. The land strictly under peasant proprietorship varied from 31.9 per cent in the department of le Nord, to 62 and 69 per cent in the Vire district. But it was very unevenly distributed. Many could only boast a cottage, a garden, a cow and a little bit of a field. If owners were allowed to fence in their holdings, they would naturally be encouraged to pay for improvements by which, henceforth, they would be the only ones to benefit. But then things would be very much harder for those whose plot of ground was not big enough to supply food for their livestock all the year through. And then, again,

if it was easy enough to fence-in the more or less self-contained properties, or pieces of land belonging to one and the same holder it became an expensive and almost impracticable process where narrow strips of ground were concerned, or where the land was very much split up. On the other hand, the distribution of the commons provided an admirable opportunity for the poorer members of the parish to round-off their holdings, provided always that the distribution was worked on a basis favourable to the very small people, so much per household or so much per hearth, for example, and in a manner, moreover, that would debar the lord of the manor from pushing his right of selection to the extreme limit of the law, or the big men of the place, the prosperous small-holders, the 'cocks of the village', from grabbing all the plums for themselves. One need not be very deeply versed in rural matters, to realize that here were problems of exceptional gravity.

'Broadly speaking,' writes Colonne, who was Intendant of Metz at the time, 'workmen and day-labourers bear the same relation to the farmer, as limbs bear to the organism of which they are a part. We need not, therefore, trouble over-much about what happens to the workmen when we improve the farmer's lot, for it may be taken as an invariable principle that, when you improve the output and standard of living in a given district you increase the comfort and well-being of all its inhabitants, no matter what their status and social condition. The adjustment comes about automatically, and it would argue a poor acquaintance with the nature of things to entertain the slightest doubt that such is the case.' There you have liberal optimism in the full flush of its creative ardour, quite innocently giving expression to the devastating illusions of its youthful fecundity. Although temperament and principle disposed them to favour a radical solution of their problems, the agricultural ministers, Bertin, Trudaine, and d'Ormesson, had the good sense not to let themselves be carried away by the doctrinaires, nor to defer unreservedly to their recommendations. After collecting all the evidence possible, and carrying out several detailed investigations, they adopted a policy of wise and cautious empiricism.

At the very outset, they laid down, as the principle on which they intended to share out the commons, that they would adopt the customs most favourable to the poorer members of the community. For example, in 1770, Orceau de Fontette, Intendant of Caen, authorized that two pieces of moorland should be divided, in equal portions, among all the householders in the parish. Thereupon,

those among them who were better off than the rest demurred and demanded that the distribution should be carried out afresh and the land allotted *pro rata* to the tax-assessments. The minister's reply puts the government's theory in a nutshell. 'The Controller-General sees nothing in the arguments advanced by the landlords to lead him to alter his decision. . . . Every inhabitant is entitled to an equal share in the land to be divided. In conferring property rights on people who have hitherto had none, we give them an interest in something they can call their own; in this manner men become heads of families and good citizens.' As to the enclosure of hereditary estate, the Council was careful not to establish any uniform precedent straight away. From 1767 onwards, measures were successively taken for Lorraine, les Trois Evêchés, Barrois, Hainaut, Flanders, Boulonnais, Champagne, Burgundy, Franche-Comté, Roussillon, Béarn and Corsica. Apart from the last three, the provinces concerned all belonged to the north and north-east; the rest of the kingdom was not touched. Furthermore, when it came to the point, the execution of the decrees was repeatedly deferred and sometimes suspended *sine die*, in view of local conditions. Conflicting policies had the corners rubbed off them by time and natural attrition, and it may be taken as certain that, wherever common pasturage was definitely called for by the needs of any particular locality, there was sufficient opposition forthcoming to prevent the big men tyrannizing over the smaller. Nevertheless it cannot be denied that there was a certain amount of unrest in the rural districts, and the echo of it is to be found in the remonstrances of 1789.

At a first glance these internal diversities would seem to make it difficult, or impossible, to form any comprehensive notion of rural conditions as a whole. Nevertheless, if one compares the French peasant with the peasants of central Europe and England, one is bound to admit that he was better off, both materially and morally, than any of his class in other countries. What the peasants gained, they gained at the expense of the nobility. Of all the various commodities in the market, it was farm-produce that benefited most from the rise in prices. In a word, the country folk were better clad, better fed and better housed than they had been at any time during the past hundred years. Although they were still handicapped by the remnants of their old feudal obligations, they had been absorbed into the propertied class by so natural a succession of changes, they were so thoroughly accustomed to obtain what they wanted as a

result of personal effort, and as the reward of their toil that, when the Revolution came, they never put forward any claim to share in Church property *gratuitously*, and, often enough, they evinced a strong unwillingness to purchase émigrés' belongings, because they looked on them as patrimonial property, of which the owners had been forcibly deprived.

Civilization is a collective achievement. No one can understand the age if he fails to perceive that it rested on a material basis equally broad and equally firm, or better, on conditions of prosperity equally ample. In point of fact, the whole kingdom underwent a process of reconstruction. It was built up anew. Within a space of thirty years, ten thousand houses were put up in Paris. It was a new capital that rose up from the soil: the Faubourg Saint Honoré, the Chausseé d'Antin, the Place de la Concorde, the Faubourg Saint-Germain, the Ecole Militaire, the Rue de Provence, the Rues Bergère, Grange-Batelière, Richer, Caumartin, Poissonnière, le Peletier, the Boulevards, the Odéon quarter. The Esplanade of the Invalides, the gardens of the Champs-Élysées, the Allées de l'Etoile – all these were brought into being at this time. Towns were transformed out of all knowledge. Montpellier, Bordeaux, Toulouse, Nantes, Rennes, Nancy, Metz, Strasburg, Orleans, Tours, Lorient, all the sights that delight our eyes with quarters nobly designed, we owe to the plans laid down by King Louis the Fifteenth's Intendants: grateful prospects, sedate and gracious frontages, well-built houses, full of light and adorned with exquisite decorations. Nevertheless, as M. Georges Wildenstein has justly remarked, if we would explain, in a few words, what that peculiar quality is that imparts to the French Art of this period its grace and power, its universal ascendancy, it is not such words as 'wit', 'charm', 'delight', that we should employ in the first place, but words which connote far humbler things – sound sense, hard work, professional conscientiousness.

Corporations existed, just as they had existed in Louis the Fourteenth's day. There was the old Académie de Saint Luc with its confraternity of artificers and *genre* painters; the Académie Royale, which grouped together all who were endeavouring to qualify for a higher kind of occupation, no matter how many they might be, nor what their social status; it was at once a corporation where mutual assistance was obligatory, which watched over the interests of its members, and it was in every sense of the word, a school. The *Cours Académiques*, the *Ecole Royale des Elèves Protégés*, the *Académie de*



*France* in Rome, are all stages in that course of systematic instruction on which the lessons to be learned from the great masters of Antiquity set a fitting crown. The Salon, the only exhibition that counted, was organized by the Academy from whose members it was exclusively recruited. But what applied to painters, sculptors and engravers, also, thanks to the *Académie Royale d'Architecture*, applied to architects. The Academies through their officers, were always in touch with the public authorities represented by the leading painter and the Director of Buildings. On them the King never wearied of showering words of encouragement, commands, grants of money, pensions, quarters in the Louvre, patents of nobility, crosses of Saint Michel. 'Thus the artist, taken, as one may say, in the cradle, was tended, followed up, urged onward, yet, at the same time, kept within bounds, watched over.' It was a stern apprenticeship he had to undergo (Fragonard spent fourteen years in Boucher's studio), but such prolonged studies neither disheartened nor humiliated him. He knew that in due time they would bring their reward in the shape of fame and material success. That modern affectation, the alleged dread of estranging one's own personality, had not yet been invented. Art-lovers, the King at their head, did not swear by any particular school, or any particular system; they had no pet doctrines to inculcate. Their originality struck one as the more real because it was non-aggressive. The artist made no claim to teach or redeem society; he did not set himself up as a prophet; yet never was Art so highly prized, so widely diffused, or so thoroughly part and parcel of everyday existence: never did the various crafts dwell with it in such perfect harmony. Nor can one point to a single instance in this reign where an artist was misunderstood, or persecuted or allowed to starve.

As the literary fraternity refrained from putting in their spoke, changes in taste came about smoothly and peacefully. Let us compare Rigaud's two great portraits, the one of Louis the Fourteenth, the other of his successor. The same background, the same costume, the same imposing draperies of velvet and of ermine, the same accessories of majesty — crown, sceptre and the enormous train, adorned with fleurs-de-lis. But in Louis the Fourteenth's portrait, the general effect is of something staid, firm, rigid; in Louis the Fifteenth's, on the other hand, everything is mobile, the mantle is being raised, the drapery is stirring. Alert, full of life, the subject of the picture can scarcely restrain his impatience. Till now, Art had been accustomed to depict things at rest; here it was essaying to

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catch them on the wing, to seize the psychological moment, to portray vivacity and movement.

The seventeenth century had been very fond of mythology in art; the eighteenth century loved it no less; but it loved it with a difference. Gently it bade farewell to the warlike divinities, so virtuous and so imposing. Jupiter, Juno and Mars were quietly dethroned by Venus, Cupid, Amphitrite, Bacchus and Aurora, with all their attendant throng of Loves, Nymphs, Nereïds, Fauns and Tritons. When Lemoyne was painting the ceiling of the *Salon d'Hercule*, he gave out that he was about to show how virtue uplifts man above himself and leads him on to immortality. When, however, he came to carry out his design, he transformed the Works and the Virtues into white statues soberly lined up on the edge of the canvas on a great marble balustrade. Beyond is an open sky of limpid azure, where pale clouds float and drift, and where gods and goddesses jostle and squeeze one another in order to watch the hero's chariot mounting ever higher and higher towards the throne where his bride, the recompense of all his toil, awaits him – Hebe crowned with roses. The apotheosis of Hercules is an enormous affair, fifteen feet by sixteen. Lemoyne banished all stucco ornamentation, all those sculptured compartments wherewith the seventeenth century, in imitation of the Renaissance, loved to encumber its ceilings. But the denizens of Olympus were destined to quit this grandiose setting for less extensive demesnes. Everywhere we shall again encounter goddesses with the whitest of flesh giving ear to the amorous discourse of some ungainly deity with sun-tanned skin. Now they will be rising from the waves, now reclining with indolent grace on woolly clouds, and now, again, half-hidden in a maze of mist-blue verdure. Louis the Fourteenth had been portrayed as a Roman Emperor, and as a warrior. Nattier painted the daughters of Louis the Fifteenth as Hebe, Flora and Diana; Madame de Clermont as a Sultana; Madame de Pleneuf as Venus; and Mademoiselle Prévost as a Bacchante.

Artists still betook themselves to Italy. There are so many Italies. This time it was the Venetians that attracted them, rather than Raphael, and rather than the Bolognese. To them they went for the secrets of light, for their tawny glow, their colouring rich with golden dust. But the great revelation were the Rubens masterpieces, at Luxemburg, Crozat and Antwerp which Largillière copied. Not that the French artists sought to reproduce his nude figures with their ample charms, it was not his vulgar display of fleshly opulence

they were fain to borrow. They fined down his exuberances, they spiritualised him; but almost all came under the spell of his glamour, of his glorious light. He revealed to them the joy that dwells in colour, the delight that is born of movement. It was Rubens who introduced them to the Northern Schools. It was from Snyders that Desportes and Oudry, the animal painters, took their inspiration. Fragonard went to study Rembrandt in his native Holland, and, for a time, he was all for browns and golds, with the same decisively contrasted lights and shades. The most widely different schools, the most opposing talents, budded and blossomed in simultaneous profusion. What more splendid tribute could be paid to the glory of this age than to say that Boucher and Chardin, La Tour and Nattier, Fragonard and Greuze, Bouchardon and Pigalle, – all alike basked in the sunshine of its admiration.

In the matter of urban planning, churches had long since lost their pride of place as the principal buildings of the town. Servandoni built Saint Sulpice, and Soufflot the Pantheon, but Place Louis the Fifteenth in Paris, Place de la Bourse at Bordeaux, Place Stanislas at Nancy, Gabriel Louis, Heré, Giral were responsible for nothing but civic buildings, a palace, a warehouse, a theatre, an aqueduct, pleasure-gardens with ornamental waters, flowers, trees and terraces. Mansart's lessons were still remembered: uniformity of design, clearness of proportion, discretion in ornament. The traditional forms were still retained, but they were treated with an added touch of youthful elegance. But over and above the ornamental part of the thing, rooms were better arranged. The architect was continually taking the sculptor into his confidence, and not the sculptor alone, but the painter, the cabinet-maker, the upholsterer, the gilder, the pottery dealer, the ironworker, the goldsmith. We talk nowadays about fine-art and applied art. In Louis the Fifteenth's time such a distinction would have made people smile. In those days art was a necessity, just as much as eating and drinking. And so you met it everywhere; a table, a bust, an easy chair, a chest of drawers, a lock – all alike bore witness to its influence. This perfect interpenetration is the hall-mark of a great artistic age.

We only have to compare a fine seventeenth century residence, such as President Lambert's in the Ile Saint-Louis, with some of the big houses of the later Paris – the hôtel Biron, the hôtel Roquelaure or the Elysée, to see how greatly the mode and conditions of life had altered. Less space was given up to mere display, rooms were more

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homely, more easily accessible, and there were plenty of smaller rooms, cheerful and cosy, rooms one could live in, and feel at home. In place of all the marble and elaborate stuccoing, there were panels of wood, painted in bright colours, framed with slender beading rounding away at the corners or branching out into delicate sprays. On this side and that, were mirrors that endlessly reflected the forms and faces of the company. If the architect purposely left some wider spaces here and there, they were reserved entirely for tapestries, the royalest ever woven to delight the eye. Beauvais, Aubusson, the Gobelins, the Savonnerie rivalled one another in producing masterpieces of their art. De Troy, Boucher, Oudry, Natoire spent no small part of their lives in drawing designs for tapestries. Had it not been for the famous *Amours des dieux*, the *Fêtes italiennes* and the *Fêtes chinoises*, Boucher would fill a far smaller place on the roll of Fame. As for the painter only little nooks and corners were left for him. A space above the doorway, a circular or an oval frame, or a panel betwixt two windows. 'Drawing-room artists', David would call them, contemptuously. Well, so they were. But why the scorn? As far as the dwelling-house was concerned, the eighteenth century is the last that can be said to have created a style; not an abstract style, not a regimented, strait-jacketed affair, rigid with formulas and dogmas, but a spontaneous adaptation of every part of the decorative scheme to a certain manner of living. Detached from their setting, the pastorals of Boucher attract a greater degree of attention than they were intended to excite, and they suffer in consequence. This little world of dimpled Cupids, and plump *grisettes*, is not intended to be looked at through a magnifying glass. We must imagine the whole thing back in its appropriate surroundings, bordered with grotto-work and flowering palms, in salons of willow-green or pearly grey, just a delicious detail in a much vaster *ensemble* which gives it its meaning and its charm.

And here, beneath all these decorated walls and ceilings, are divers articles of furniture, in light-coloured woods, and innocent of bronze: comfortable chairs, with good elbows, easy to carry about: the *bergère*, the *marquise*, the *fauteuil à poudrer*; beds without posts, beds *à la duchesse* and *à la polonaise*; big chests of drawers, bulging and bellying, adorned with designs in Chinese lacquer-work; and a whole regiment of little tables: the *chiffoniere*, the dressing-table, the *haricot*, the night-table, the card-table, the afternoon tea-table, the work-table. The days had gone by when Louis the Fourteenth battered upon *ragoûts* brought in, ill-cooked and half-cold, with a

flourish of trumpets, from distant kitchens. Nowadays, they dined and supped in well-warmed rooms, secure from interruption. 'The long tranquil reign of Louis the Fifteenth', says Antonin Carême who had charge of Talleyrand's kitchens, 'was the Golden Age of *la grande cuisine française*.' Cookery was a fine-art, worthy of its compeers; and so it was inspired by the same enthusiasms. At the close of the century, the craze for ruins was at its height, in the cook's domain as well as in the landscape gardener's. Carême, a noted architect in sugar, made himself famous by presenting Hubert Robert's reproductions of ancient buildings in caramel and nougat.

The folk that dwelt in these houses were the real conquerors of Europe; a Europe so closely welded and so truly one that, even when its princes went to war, they could not disunite it. Versailles, in those days, was all predominant. La Granja, Wurtzburg, Mainz, Anspach, Bayreuth, Stuttgart, Bruhl, Sans-Souci, Parma, Warsaw with its Saxon Electors – all were French. Frederick the Great, Grimm, the Prince de Ligne, Casanova, the Abbé Galiani, Catherine the Second, Walpole, Maria Theresa, Joseph the Second wrote a French that was always very, and often extraordinarily, good. But our civilization is so humane that it, alone of all others, can lead each nation to develop, and bring to perfection, whatever is most truly and most finely national within its core. The sworn enemy of coarse and overweening vanity, it neither stifles nor oppresses; it kindles the mind and refines the senses. First and foremost, it is a code of manners, the ideal of the gentleman, an ideal whose aim is so to acquire the art of social life as to know how to behave in every circumstance that may befall, no matter how critical or unforeseen it be. Then again it taught one how to be, and how to do, without drawing attention to oneself; how to shine oneself by making others shine. Hence those *festas* of conversation, of fine discourse, of clever dialectic; all that profusion of attentions, of courtesies, of discerning praise. Hence, too, the incomparable savour of those anecdotes of Chamfort's in which he shows us how ready-witted were those ancestors of ours, how unerring their repartee, how easy and imperturbable their bearing, how keen their sense of reality and truth.

This society, so brilliant, so richly endowed, did not even know the meaning of hypocrisy. The French which it spoke rang clear and true, without preciousness, or over-emphasis or bombast; we may, indeed, add, till Rousseau's day, without picturesque or poetic adornment. Never was there a language better fitted to express the inner motions of the heart, the subtler secrets of the soul. The skilful

could use it with the precision of an anatomist poisoning his scalpel. I know not whether human dignity was somewhat abated thereby. At all events the mirror was held up to the age, and the age saw itself as it was, without prudery, prejudice or fear, in all its naked reality. More effectively than a whole brigade of bawdy chroniclers, it was an honest artillery-officer who succeeded in saddling the age with its traditional reputation for depravity. People confessed to immodesty, to sensuality, to kicking over the conjugal traces; but the beauty, and the scandal, of *Liaisons dangereuses*, is the marriage of evil, the consorting together of man and woman for the cold-blooded pursuit of pleasure and the gymnastics of the passions. It is sin committed, not from love, or weakness, but as a game, for the pleasure of talking about it; it is a frigid and calculated affair, like a problem in science or mathematics. When it reaches these lengths, vice loses itself in a longing for nirvana: characters and action are pushed to that extreme limit at which, as M. Giraudoux has said, things go where the French people do not like them to go, to the region where lawlessness reigns supreme. That is why this book, for all its lucidity, is, from the historian's point of view, a misleading book.

Even at its most licentious, the age did not lose all regard for elegance and moderation, and among the little group of *grands seigneurs* whose wealth and indolence gave them leisure to cultivate their vices, a thousand cross-currents – frivolity, fashionable pursuits, indifference, fear of ridicule – would have hindered them from wallowing in any thorough-going slough of perversion. After the Regency, there was nothing to compare with the poisoning scandals, or the bestial debauchery of bygone ages. 'The French,' wrote Duclos in 1751, 'are the only people who can indulge in depravity and yet, in their inmost hearts, keep free from corruption and maintain their courage unimpaired; the only people in whom heroic qualities can subsist side by side with pleasure, luxury and self-indulgence. If their virtues lack consistency, their vices lack root. The same frivolity which hinders the development of their talents and virtues, preserves them from cruel and premeditated crime.' Senac de Meilhan, who, in 1787, presented the world with his *Considérations sur les Mœurs*, portrays a society still more effete, still more artificial and bored, with all its resources for diversion and delight exhausted. Scarcely a page, but he returns to harp on what he calls its sexagenarian character. 'Don't look for genius,' he says, 'or for wit, or for a strong character in what they call "*la bonne*

*compagnie*." People possessing those advantages and those good qualities would meet with a cool reception there. They would be like fish out of water. . . "*La bonne compagnie*" somehow reminds one of the gardens at Marly where the trees are clipped into balls, and so carefully trimmed, so that not a single leaf protrudes beyond its neighbour. If one of these puny trees began talking to some proud giant of an oak, imagine how it would remonstrate with it, horrified at seeing its vigorous branches spreading far and wide in such a lawless, haphazard fashion. The little Marly tree would make use of some expression as this: "Oh, but this is not good form, you know!"

People have called the eighteenth century the century of sensibility. But sensibility is not sentiment. A 'sensible' or sensitive spirit is one which recognizes the occasions which call for sentiment, which seeks them out, and if need be, invents them, though this would more properly come into the category of Romanticism. It is the dawn, not the day. Racine had written the drama of love: Marivaux proceeded to write the love's comedy. He depicted it in its early stages, when it was still alloyed with mortification, mock-modesty and vanity. By combining these elements, he got all manner of chemico-physiological effects which it would be very difficult to discern under ordinary conditions. That is why he stands alone among the writers of his day. People hankered after more real heroes. In *Manon Lescaut* (1731), love is not a mysterious, magical something that raises a man above himself; there, the pure and sovereign passion is at grips with poverty, with little meannesses of character and all the trials and tribulations of mundane existence. Manon and her chevalier love each other so passionately that they lose caste and go down the social scale owing to the very persistence of their love. What set one up against a character like Valmont was his cold-blooded self-possession, his tactics – he knew so well how to play his cards! What, on the other hand, is so moving about Des Grieux's love for Manon or, to take an instance from real life, the love of Julie de Lespinasse for a man like Guibert, is precisely that life baulks them – that they are 'up against things' – at every turn.

Mademoiselle de Lespinasse loves, but she suffers, she repines, she cries aloud. She counts the letters she receives. Her very life depends on the postman. 'There is a certain letter-carrier who, for a year past, has been putting me in a fever.'

Guibert had made his *début* on the scene as a man of boundless promise. He wrote an *Essai de Tactique*, and people said he was going

to be another Frederick the Great. Eloquence, high tragedy were going to take on a fresh lease, under the fire of his genius. Mademoiselle de Lespinasse began by admiring him. Before very long she came to rate him at his proper value, which was fair to middling, and to realize that he was but an addled hero. The disappointment did not kill her love; it did but add to its trials:

'You are not a friend to me; you never can be. I have absolutely no faith in you. You have wrought me the deepest and most agonizing wrong that could ever afflict and rend a steadfast heart; you are robbing me, maybe for ever, at this very moment, of the one consolation which Heaven had granted me for the days I still may have to live. Well then, what am I to say to you? You have filled the cup to overflowing: the past, the present, the future offer me nothing but sorrow, regret, remorse. Well, *mon ami*, I know it all, I fancy. I have weighed it all, and yet I am drawn to you by an attraction, by feelings which, abhor them as I may, are yet as potent, as ineluctable as doom and destiny. *Mon ami*, I love you, as one ought to love, wildly, madly, with transport and despair.'

So her life went on, now down in the depths, now up to the skies that is to say she was still, and always, in love. Repentance, hatred, jealousy, remorse, scorn for herself and him – all these torments she endured. There were some days when she fancied she was cured. She hears a little music; she is calm, she has forgotten at last, and she must needs celebrate her release. Then on comes the madness again, more fiery than ever. 'You know quite well that when I hate you, it really is that I love you to such a degree that I lose my reason.' Or again, 'I suffer, I love you and I am waiting for you.'

The closest friends of Mademoiselle de Lespinasse, Marmontel, Condorcet, Turgot, never knew in detail the drama of her love affair. She would sometimes surprise them with her outbreaks of temper, but they put them down to the absence of her first lover, M. de Mora. D'Alembert himself, greatly as it imported him to know the truth, never penetrated the mystery until he came to read certain papers that he came upon after his friend's death. Up to the very last, she had the courage to see people. One warm spring morning as she was crossing the Tuileries, she suddenly began to look back with regretful longing on the former promptings of her heart:

'I do not want to love strongly any more; I will love gently,' and then she added, as if to correct herself, 'but never weakly.' Oh rare and lamentable victim! How much more representative or, if you will, how much more ordinary, is this Madame Geoffrin, whose



salon, for twenty-five years, was the best organized, and the most complete of all. To be sure her husband did not count for much in her life. He was manager at the Saint-Gobain glass-works, a very wealthy man, very useful, very well off, and a particularly poor conversationalist. As he never had anything to say at table, no one noticed his departure. Madame Geoffrin's outstanding quality was her clearness of vision, her good, sound sense. She had, as the saying goes, her head screwed on the right way. Horace Walpole, who had seen a lot of her, before attaching himself to Madame du Deffand, liked her immensely, and he invariably speaks of her as one of the best brains, one of the most understanding people, he had ever met. 'I never saw, in the whole of my existence, anyone who could put her finger so unerringly on people's foibles, their vanities and shams; anyone who could make you see them so clearly, or bring them home to you so convincingly.' She was very much the mistress in her own house, with an eye on everything, an authoritative manner and a sharp tongue for transgressors. With a word, she would pull up any discussions that seemed to be drifting on to dangerous ground. She herself compared her mind to a reel that unwound itself by degrees. This wise, deliberate way of hers, was undoubtedly her most salient characteristic. 'Mustn't pull down the old house, before we've put up the new one,' was one of her sayings. One little incident reveals her to the life. It outraged her ideas of seemliness and order that Falconet's bust of Diderot should show him without a wig, so she had a marble one added. Noisiness, rowdyism, any sort of rushing about, put her dreadfully on edge. One of her *habitués*, Stanislas Poniatowski, had to become King of Poland before she could make up her mind to travel. She was then seventy-seven and had never been farther than Fontainebleau.

Madame Geoffrin lived in the Rue Saint Honoré. Across the river, in the Rue Princesse, dwelt someone else who was quite an unimportant person socially and who, though not so well-off, was just as much of a home-bird; one of those Parisians who never go outside their own parish, who look on Saint-Cloud as the end of the world, and get Nature to come to them in the shape of a pear from Montreuil, or a pound of peaches or a bundle of herbs for the stock-pot. The person in question was called Jean Baptiste Chardin. And now we are right down on the plain, honest homely level. Chardin was the son of a master-carpenter. He tells us about himself in his paintings, quite easily and naturally. There he is, an honest, good-natured fellow, happy, easy in his mind, thoroughly at home

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amid the familiar objects that surround him. Hard by, a mother is teaching her little one to say grace and the child, with its little hands clasped, is softly babbling its little prayer; through a half-open door come sounds from the kitchen, water on the boil, a drinking-cup let fall, a servant polishing something, or putting down a basket of 'shopping' on the table. This painter of little, lowly things is the most majestic of masters. He informs his work with a virtue, a rectitude, a purity of heart which compel our admiration and respect. He had but one great sorrow in his life; his son's death. To see a Chardin exhibition is to see and understand what the lives of the working people really are; how industrious they are, how provident, and how deep their self-respect and their sense of honour. 'Not a woman of the working-classes comes there,' says a brochure of 1741, 'who does not imagine she is looking at an "abstract and brief chronicle" of herself, of her own home life, her way of going on, her daily occupations, her moral code, the behaviour of her children, the contents of her rooms, the things she wears.'

That is the sort of thing which brings back the poetry to an age that is too rich, too pampered at least so far as its upper classes are concerned and, in a single word, too materialistic. Are we fain to discover where the spirit dwelt? Well, there are excellent bishops of the Church, but they were administrators, not apostles. Shall we find it among the revolutionaries? They were sleek and well-fed, academicians, people living comfortably on their incomes. They were threatened with gaol? All humbug. They are safe enough. All this practical outlook on things, all this common sense, all this optimism and complacent feeling of security would exhaust our patience did we not find in the country nobility, the middle-classes and the working population, a compensating feeling for the sacredness of home, the infinite tenderness of family love, with all the cares, the sorrows, the sacrifices and the anxieties which it brings in its train.

Prints, memoirs, portraits, letters, enable us to reconstruct in all its details, what the life of the family actually was. Monsieur Edmond Pilon has given us a very enlightening account of it, but perhaps the richest of all the sources on which he has drawn for his facts consists in the housekeeping-books, the old-fashioned family records in which, day in and day out, when his labours were over, and the children put to bed, the father of the family would note down, in due order, the divers events that happened within the family circle; births, first communions, sales of land, what work was

a-doing, illnesses, deaths, and so on. Cropping up among these prosaic, day-to-day observations, you sometimes come across bits of advice, reflections on people and things, something, maybe, to be read and pondered by the eldest son. What charming pages people – and some of the most sceptical people at that – have written about their parents. We all know what a ‘to-do’ Voltaire had with his father and mother; yet, turn up the philosophic dictionary under ‘Fathers’, ‘Mothers’, ‘Children’, and you will be amazed to see the deep feeling of veneration and respect, not without a spice of the comic, with which young Arouet treats of this great and noble subject. Take Diderot; how deep and genuine the emotion with which he brings before us the worthy cutler of Langres, welcoming, with tears in his eyes, his little Denis as he comes back from school with a whole armful of prizes and *couronnes*. And Caron the clock-maker, the father of Beaumarchais. And Favert the pastrycook. What ties of affection, ay, and what pride! ‘I simply dote on my son,’ says Robert de Saint Victor, a magistrate.

Of all the writers of the Old Regime, Rétif de la Bretonne, son of a ploughman turned printer, is the only one who had combined experience of the life of the peasant and the town-worker. His father had long been expressing a wish to get away from the country and settle down with a wife in Paris, but the grandfather had stood in the way, and brought pressure on him to marry the girl he had chosen for him. When the son passed his word that he would do as he wished, the old man softened and drew close to him:

‘Depend on it,’ he said, as they walked back together to the farm, ‘depend on it, my son, that as you have honoured your father, so will your children honour you.’

Then he explained the reasons of his conduct. What he wanted was that his son should stay on the land, stay on and keep up the honour of the family name, there, in the place in which his forebears had made themselves respected.

‘We are working people, and glad of it I am. The working-man is the salt of the earth. It is he who pays the taxes, who does the work, who sows and reaps, carries on trade, builds houses and makes the things people want. The right to be a drone is a poor sort of right. Don’t let us pine for it. You’ve seen some of the nobility out shooting at la Puisaye, gaiters and hobnailed boots, wearing an old rusty sword, nearly dying of hunger and yet ashamed to do a job of work. Do you want to be like one of them?’

Side by side with that, let us quote a little story that the aforesaid

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Rétif tells in one of his *Nuits*. One evening, in the Rue de L'Egyptienne, he fell in with a priest who, coming along attended by a little choir boy, was taking the sacrament to a dying man. Rétif went too, joining in the responses. When they reached the Rue Verdet they climbed up a staircase to the fifth floor of one of the houses, where a poor wood-sawyer had his humble dwelling:

'My brother,' said the priest, 'you have lived a virtuous but a hard life here below. Put your trust in God's merciful goodness. You have had nothing but trials and tribulations in this world; the blessings await you in the next. When one has borne with resignation, so many ills. . . .'

'But,' said the dying sawyer, 'I've been the happiest of men: I've had the best of wives, good children, plenty of work, good health. . . . Why, I've been one of the lucky ones. . . .'

No social envy, no jealousy, no bitterness. The principle of paternal authority makes of every man 'the head of a family who stands erect in his own right by virtue of the hereditary worth which he represents, and which he hands on to his successors. He is inferior to no man and superior to none. He is what he is.'

There are hundreds of examples to draw from. Here is one. The Duc de Croy (he it is who tells the tale) was invited to the wedding of His Serene Highness, the Prince de Condé. After dancing all night long, the bride and bridegroom and their friends packed themselves into a tilt-cart, drove out of the Palais Bourbon and, picking up a friend who lived in the Place Vendôme on their way, set out for Vanves, where the bride, Charlotte de Rohan-Soubise, had decided she would spend the day. There, they had rides on the roundabout, made no end of a din and wandered at large about the village. At last they fell in with a wedding party of peasants on their way to church. Villagers and royalty mingled together, and went into church like one party. The curé made them all a nice little speech, and, when it was all over, they went off and feasted together. In the delightful and most veracious description which M. Lenotre gives of old time France and the people of other days, in his volume entitled *Gens de la Vieille France*, he rightly insists on the cordial trust, the perfectly simple and natural mode of address, the absolute good humour and kindness which subsisted among all classes and which made travellers from Germany and England open their eyes in amazement.

Among the *lettres de cachet* which M. Funck-Brentano has disinterred, the authenticity of which he has fully established, a very large

number were granted at the request of quite humble families. A glazier, a plumber, a fan-dealer, a tripe-merchant, or a herb-seller implores the King to put a son or a daughter under lock and key, so as to correct their undesirable proclivities, or keep them away from dangerous company. Was not the King, as one female suppliant expressed it, the preserver of families? He was; of all families.

Of course it would be easy enough to quote examples of a different character, more racy, or more risky, or stories of grander people. Was it not Madame d'Houdetot who, speaking of her marriage, said 'I got married so as to go into society, to attend dances, to be in the swim, to go to the opera and the play.' Chamfort, somewhere or other, tells a story about the Princesse de Soubise, how, after living twenty-two years apart from her husband, she sent him a tall young man whose years were about as many, and who presented him with a note which read: 'Monsieur, behold your son!' Going one better than Chamfort, the Goncourts quote a letter from a Comtesse de Maugiron to her husband, which ran like this, 'I write you because I have nothing to do; I leave off because I have nothing to say, Yours Sassenage, very sorry to be Maugiron.' These stories, and some more of the same kidney, have been driven to death. Because they have been so often repeated, people have come to think they account for everything and apply to everyone. As a matter of fact, as soon as we get away from the narrow circle of the Paris salons, it is quite clear that France as a whole was not corrupt. The 'family' lived on, so revered and so firmly established, that the virtues for which it stood lent a grandeur to the very lowliest of lives.

It was not there that the evil lurked. It is a very sure thing that too long a period of prosperity tends to blur our accuracy of vision. It makes us forgetful of the foundations on which our civilization rests. Such things as invasion, revolt or extreme want, at least compel us to direct our thoughts to the conditions necessary for security and wealth. Necessity is the mother of invention. Theories stand or fall by the acid test of hard facts. Living in the bosom of a polite, wealthy and well-organized society, never having had to put up with the insults of a coarse brute or an invader, or the threats of a bloodthirsty revolutionary, quite content with life as it was, abundantly convinced that all was for the best in the best possible of worlds, the Frenchman of 1760 began to think that his good fortune would last for ever, that all things requisite and necessary for man's comfort here on earth came into being and preserved themselves of their own accord, that things would always go along easily and

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smoothly, provided they were not wilfully interfered with. In other words a knowledge of the laws of Nature and the progress of Science turned the laws, restraints and experience of past ages into so much useless and odious lumber. Doubtless Voltaire made a laughing-stock of Pangloss, but, barring earthquakes and Bulgars, not one of the ills that fell to *Candide's* lot, but could be put down to fanaticism, or the Jesuits, or ignorance, or to Fréron and his mob. People have said that the snug and comfortable France of Louis Philippe's days, was bored to tears. Louis the Fifteenth's France was much too witty to indulge in yawning. It beguiled the time by talking in the air.

It is not the people's business to guide the ship of State. It is the King's. That, a hundred and twenty years after the *Fronde*, a citizen of the Rue Mazarine should have had never a thought for Broussel and the barricades, need not astonish or anger any man. But it would have been astonishing, it would have been a grave matter, if the King had thought no more about them. For the King, who embodied the idea of the nation, of the nation down the ages, also symbolized its permanence, its memory and its foresight. The crisis of 1770 was about to put Louis the Fifteenth to the test. In the light of it we shall be able to pronounce our verdict. We know the *man* already. What the *King* was, we shall shortly learn.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE KING

THE King was now sixty. Death had been busy with those around him. His beloved daughter, Madame the Infanta, his son, his daughter-in-law, the eldest of his grandsons, and the best: at all these the Leveller had struck, blow upon blow. In 1764, Madame de Pompadour succumbed to an attack of inflammation of the lungs. For a whole week she lay like one choking, fighting for breath, spitting blood and thinking that every fit of coughing would be her last. She uttered no complaint. She dictated her wishes, set her accounts in order, consigned her animals to Buffon, distributed her jewellery, sent for a priest, and sought pardon of her husband. On the very last day of her life she asked her women to put a little rouge on her cheeks to hide her pallor. Then, as her confessor was about to depart, she said to him:

'Stay a little longer; we will go together.'

The law forbade that a dead body should be kept in a royal abode; scarcely, therefore, had the Marquise closed her eyes, when two serving-men came and bore her hurriedly away upon a litter, with only a thin sheet to cover her, so that all the outline of her form was visible. A service was held in the church of Notre-Dame at Versailles, and the body was interred in Paris. The King stood at a window in his study and watched the procession as it moved away. It was a dreadful night; blowing a hurricane. The gusts caught up the rain and fiercely dashed it to earth again; the torches guttered in the gale. In the darkness, Louis stood and listened to the coaches as they rattled along on the uneven cobbles. When all was silent, he turned and closed the balcony door. Great tears were streaming down his cheeks.

'That,' he said, 'was all I could do for her, a friend of twenty years!'

Whither now, was he to turn to refuge? He betook himself to the Queen. Her whole life had been spent in doing deeds of charity, and, now, until she died, she gave him four more years of tenderness. He also conceived a regard for Madame de Séran, whose story Marmontel has related. These were months of the very purest

friendship. She came to see him at the palace, she often wrote to him, and lent him books and led him on to talk. She questioned him as to his tastes, and interrogated him about his past. He asked her what sort of post she would like at Court.

'The Princesse d'Armagnac's,' she said, without hesitation.

'You are very young to take the place of a friend who beheld my birth, who has held me on her knees and whom I have loved from my cradle upwards. You must take the time, Madame, to win my confidence; I have been so often deceived.'

Another day, she began talking to him about his mistresses and asked him if he had really been fond of the Marquise.

'No,' he replied, 'I never really loved her.'

'But you kept her with you as long as she lived.'

'Yes; if I had sent her away, it would have been the death of her.'

He was afraid of being alone. But instead of gathering round him to win him back, his children studied to avoid him. While he lived, the Dauphin adopted the attitude of the heir presumptive who strongly disapproves of everything done by the present wearer of the crown. When he died, the Duc de Berry took his place as heir. He was a big, good sort of fellow enough, who meant no harm. Like his brother he thought it incumbent upon him to keep aloof and wear a disapproving expression. With increasing years, the King's daughters had grown shrewish and crabbed in temper. Madame Adelaide could not keep still. In a single half-hour she would be busy with a dozen different things. She was energetic, loud and coarse in her speech. Privately, she used to say that Laverdy was a scoundrel and called Madame de Pompadour Mamma Strumpet. She deafened the King with her reproaches and recriminations. Madame Louise had entered the Carmelite Convent at Saint Denis. This was a great grief to Louis the Fifteenth. Hardly a week went by but he went to take her sweetmeats and cakes; but he was afraid lest she should come under the thumb of some ambitious clerics who might make use of her to try and influence his policy. In this dreary desert, who would replace the faithful friend of former days?

Madame du Barry, or to give her her real name, Jeanne Bécu, was born at Vaucouleurs in 1743. Her father was reputed to have been a monk in the Picpus monastery, J. B. Gomard de Vaubernier, in religion Frère Ange. Thanks to some rich protectors, the mother was enabled to have her child, whose name was Jeanne, brought up by the Sisters of the Sacred Heart, with whom she remained for



seven or eight years. We next hear of her as companion to a Madame Delay de la Garde, the widow of a tax-farmer. The son of the house took a fancy to her, and she became his mistress, with the result that she was turned out neck and crop. She then became a shop-girl and, later on, a fashion-plate designer. A Comte Jean du Barry, a personage with an unsavoury reputation, took her away and installed her in the Rue de Jussieu. She was now thoroughly in the swim and received among her guests, Crébillon, Guibert, Collé, the aged Moncrif, the Ducs de Duras and Richelieu, the Comte de Thiard and the Comte de Bissy. It was easy to get the entrée to Versailles. Did Jeanne Bécu go there alone or did Richelieu take her? The second is the likelier hypothesis. One day, by a great piece of luck, she came face to face with the King. He was much struck with her and sent someone to ask her for a rendezvous. The liaison proceeded discreetly, but swiftly. Jean du Barry was a married man, so they got his young brother, Guillaume, to come up from Languedoc. He, in return for a respectable *quid pro quo*, married her, and immediately afterwards, without exercising his marital rights, returned to his very much smartened-up country-seat. Furnished, now, with a name and a title, Madame du Barry was introduced, presented, officially admitted to Court, and installed in the little apartments on the second floor (April, 1769).

'They say that I am Sainte-Foix's successor,' Louis is said to have remarked to a friend.

'Yes, Sire, just as you are Pharamond's.'

That is a neat story, too neat, probably, to be true. Never was it more necessary to take things with a grain of salt. All the foul things that were put into circulation about the favourite were, in point of fact, the joint work of the Choiseul and Parliamentary cliques. They would have put up with it if the King had chosen the Duchesse de Gramont, but they could not forgive him his shop-girl. The pamphlets gave her out to be a prostitute, a coarse, foul-mouthed creature, rotten to the core,

Tous nos laquais l'avaient eue  
Lorsque, trottant dans la rue,  
Vingt sous offerts à sa vue  
La déterminaient d'abord.

Nevertheless Madame Claude Saint-André, who has had recourse to the most unimpeachable evidence, has drawn a life-like and very different picture for us. One day, for example, the Duc d'Aiguillon

presented a *cheval-léger* belonging to his company, a certain M. de Belleval, who desired to put in a plea for a man who had deserted. 'Madame du Barry,' writes the petitioner, 'was one of the prettiest women of the Court, where there were pretty women in abundance, and, certainly, the most seductive in every attribute of her person. Her hair, which she often wore unpowdered, was of the loveliest blond hue, and she had such a profusion she did not know what to do with it. Her eyes were blue, with a frank and caressing expression that lingered on the person she was talking to, as though she were scanning his face to see what effect her words were having on him. She had a delicious nose, a tiny mouth and a skin of dazzling whiteness. One soon fell beneath her spell, and that is what happened to me, and to such an extent that I almost forgot what I had come for, in the delight of gazing upon her.'

However, the officer pulled himself together and explained the nature of his request.

'I promise you I will speak to the King about it,' Madame du Barry replied, 'and I hope His Majesty will not refuse to exercise his clemency.'

Then, after a little polite conversation, she dismissed them. M. d'Aiguillon bowed and kissed her hand, saying:

'This is for the Captain. Is there nothing for the Company?'

Laughingly she put out her hand for Belleval to kiss.

Madame du Barry was kind, unpretentious and without malice. She wished no harm to anybody, liked to do what she could for people and was the first to laugh at the songs that were composed about her. Accounts are unanimous in giving praise to her unbounded charity, her sweetness and her readiness to forgive and forget. Her friends worshipped her enthusiastically. 'You are one of Nature's privileged ones,' wrote one of them to her. 'Your beauty is like your kindness. They will both live as long as you do.' The Comte d'Espinhal, the Marquis de Bouille and Talleyrand add a few touches to that. 'Both in private and in public her behaviour is most decorous,' said the first. 'Her tone had nothing common about it; still less anything vulgar,' said the second. As for the third, he put her far above Madame de Pompadour, both in speech and manners. 'Though not so well educated, Madame du Barry spoke with considerable correctness. . . She liked talking, and she had acquired the knack of telling a story with a good deal of vivacity.'

For the rest, whether at Versailles or Louveciennes, she read a great deal, taught herself, kept her ears open and cleverly steered

clear of dangerous subjects. She had a natural instinct for dress and adornment; she knew how to keep a group of people entertained, to preside over a dinner table, to distract and console the King. But she was totally ignorant of politics. The detestation with which, from the very outset, the Duc de Choiseul regarded her, remains something of a mystery. Doubtless he was led astray by the jealous attitude of his sister, Madame de Gramont. Be that as it may, some of the devices to which he descended to affront Madame du Barry and to set people violently against her were puerile enough in all conscience. To get her presented, Richelieu had all the trouble in the world to find a sponsor who would pass muster. It came to his having to go down to the country and dig out an old Comtesse de Béarn, an intrepid litigant, with an enormous family, up to her eyes in debt and quite willing to sell her services for hard cash. But, even so, Choiseul nearly persuaded her to take to her bed at the last moment. None of the ladies of the Court were present at the ceremony, but next day the Duc gave a brilliant reception at his house, at which the big Society people pretended to be tumbling over one another. Naturally there was a reaction against all this, and all the minister's enemies henceforth made a point of paying the favourite the most assiduous attention. In this way she came to be the centre of the anti-parliamentary party, nay even of the Church party. She was accused of having turned Louis the Fifteenth against the magistrates, just as if the quarrel between the lawyers and the Crown had not been going on for half a century, and as if things were not envenomed enough as they were! Sénac de Meilhan, who saw a great deal of Madame du Barry round about 1785, passes, on her actions, a verdict which seems to be wholly just. 'The most important events that took place during her ascendancy, passed before her eyes like the figures of a Shadow Show. She bore no part in them and they only lingered on as a vague memory in her mind. Though nothing in her youth and upbringing had forewarned her against vice, though want and evil counsels had led her astray, she never wrought anyone any ill, though she was well able to do so. Such moderation is remarkable, considering her position, and entitles her to the indulgence of even the severest judges.'

The Comte de Lasteyrie possesses a portrait of Louis the Fifteenth by Drouais dating from 1773. This canvas was included in the Exhibition of the four portraitists in 1930, moreover there is a replica of it at Versailles. The King is attired in coat of red velvet, richly embroidered in gold, and wears the blue riband, the medallion

of the Holy Ghost and the Order of the Golden Fleece. The head is erect and confident, the forehead high. The cheek-bones are ruddy, but the flesh is drooping and saggy. The neck is supported by a high cravat very tightly bound. Signs of incipient obesity are plainly visible. The eyelids are heavy and drooping, and the eyes have a mournful, far-off look. The compressed lips and the tightly drawn mouth give the whole face a disillusioned and contemptuous expression. It was only a few years before that the Duc de Croy described the King as still the most handsome man at Court. It looked as if he had grown old all of a sudden. Still he remained young in body. His movements were quick, and he was as active as ever. Louis made great demands on his physical strength; he hunted, rode hard, spent half the day in the open air, in the woods. A few days before Madame du Barry's presentation, he fell from his horse and was badly hurt. He was brought back unconscious, stretched on a ladder. But that did not stop him. Next week, with his arm in a sling, he was out in the park shooting, in a light spring-cart. But his troubles had aged him.

Until now, he had imagined he had unlimited time before him; time to be angry, time to forgive and time to govern. Now he discovered that Death was nearer than he had thought, and Destiny seemed to take a cruel delight in bringing home to him the warning of the Scriptures. One evening, at Madame du Barry's, a game of whist was in progress when the Marquis de Chauvelin, who was only fifty-seven, had an apoplectic fit and fell stone dead at his feet. During the Dauphin's wedding festivities, on the night of the illuminations, a panic occurred in the Place Louis the Fifteenth, and a hundred and thirty-two people were suffocated or trampled to death. During the night of December 29th, 1772, a fire broke out in the Hôtel-Dieu. The panic-stricken Sisters shut up all the doors which ought to have been left open, and dozens of the aged and infirm were smothered to death or burnt alive.

'Do you ever think,' burst out the King on one occasion, 'of the terrible account we shall some day have to render to God, for the use we have made of the life he has given us in this world?'

For four years Louis the Fifteenth led a life of almost frenzied excitement. Suppers, gaming, hunting-parties, councils, hard work, receptions were crammed into days that were all too short. In a year and eight months he built Louveciennes and filled it full of art-treasures. He was seen at Compiègne, Fontainebleau, Chantilly, Trianon, Bellevue. When they removed the scaffolding from the

bridge at Neuilly, he was there to preside. For the weddings of his three grandsons he ordered *fêtes* of dazzling splendour, where the royal majesty blazed forth with magnificent effulgence. Marie Antoinette opened the new opera hall, which had only been finished the night before and hurriedly transformed into a banqueting hall. The high-table was laid for twenty-two and the food was served in vessels of gold and silver-gilt. A marble balustrade railed them off from the throng of sightseers, who kept coming and going in a never-ending procession. On the following days, there was a State Ball, theatricals, marches-past, military parades, fireworks. Among the works performed were *Athalie*, *Persée*, *Castor and Pollux*, *Sémiramis*, with all the stars of the day, theatrical, operatic and dancing: Mademoiselle Clairon, Lekain, Sophie Arnould, Larrivée, Mademoiselle Guimard, Vestris, Gardel, d'Auberval. Tickets of admission to the festivities had been distributed in tens of thousands, and a mob of two hundred thousand gaping sightseers filled the park: it was meet that the lower orders should see the King in all his glory. One hundred and sixty thousand lamps were hung up on the trees; the Château was rippling with light; gondolas filled with minstrels glided softly along the canal. Glittering with diamonds, the King came forth on to the balcony of the Great Gallery. It was an apotheosis!

At last France had a King. Choiseul's departure had thrown the Council out of gear, but, calmly and deliberately, picking and choosing his men, Louis put it to rights again. He turned it into what, nowadays, we should call a fighting cabinet, a great cabinet composed of energetic, competent servants of the State, men of unalterable resolution. Agriculture remained with Bertin and the King's Household with La Vrillière, who had held it for half a century. The War Office went to a professional soldier, a Lieutenant-General and Infantry Inspector, the Marquis de Monteynard. The Navy was assigned to Bourgeois de Boynes. The Abbé Terray became Controller-General, and Maupeou Chancellor. All declared themselves the unyielding adversaries of the Parlements, and all alike were prepared to proceed to extreme measures to maintain the authority of the Crown and crush the factions which were standing in the way of financial reconstruction and administrative reform.

René Nicolas Charles Augustine de Maupeou was born on February 25th, 1714. He came of a family of magistrates, which had connections in the milling industry at Gonesse. About the year 1550, we meet with a Maupeou who was a notary in Paris. His

sons had posts in some office connected with finance. Two of his grandchildren entered the *Cour des Aides* and the *Chambre des Comptes* respectively. The Chancellor's own father had himself been first president of the Paris Parlement from 1743 to 1757, and had subsequently acted as Vice-Chancellor during Lamoignon's period of exile. René Nicolas himself went through the ordinary stages of promotion, and was, first, a councillor, then *président à mortier* and finally first president. He was a little dark man with very large and prominent eyes, great bushy eyebrows, a somewhat low forehead, a long nose, square at the tip, a big mouth curving upwards at the corners, a long, receding chin, a sallow, liverish complexion. From the very first he had made his mark as a scientist, as well as by his wit and good manners. He was thrifty, austere, devoted to duty and an indefatigable worker. He slept no more than four hours of a night, and then, with a brain always fresh and bright, he would polish off a formidable piece of work as if it were mere child's play. In short he was a conscientious man, afraid of nothing, the sort of man who having put his hand to the plough, would plough his furrow straight to the bitter end.

His fault lay in being over hot-tempered and precipitate. The five years he had spent at the head of the Parlement had afforded him daily experience of the underhand intrigues of his colleagues, and he was able to judge their protestations of virtue and devotion at their true worth. As he had the reputation of being on the side of the Court and against the Parlement, he had endured countless affronts and had many a time found himself in an awkward situation. His temperament would have prompted him to batter his way through all obstacles. But before acting, he used to consult with his friend, Bourgeois de Boynes, a cool, level-headed man who could distinguish the strong from the weak side of an argument. Councillor of State and subsequently in charge of naval affairs, he had been first president in the Franche-Comté Parlement, and Intendant of the province. On two occasions, he had acted as procurator-general in the provisional chamber created to take the place of the Paris Parlement. He was a steady-going, cool-headed man who had a wider knowledge of procedure than Maupeou. He had an extensive experience of legal and administrative matters, and was able, on several occasions, to curb the Chancellor's temper and prevent him from rushing wildly into some false and impossible position.

The conflict between the Parlement and Choiseul's successors broke out over the Brittany affair, which still remained unsettled.

The King had forbidden the Parlement to meddle with it, and their reply was to go on strike. During the night of the 19th-20th January, 1771, musketeers called on each individual magistrate at his house and served him with an order from the King summoning him to declare, without shift or evasion, by a plain 'yes' or 'no', whether he would, or whether he would not, resume and carry on his duties. Fifty answered 'yes'; thirty-five refused to commit themselves, and the rest said 'no.' Next day, however, the rebellious ones went from end to end of the city and succeeded, by threats and intimidation, in detaching another dozen from those who had promised obedience. The insurgent members, to the number of one hundred and thirty-two, were forthwith relieved of their functions by an Order in Council, and the following night they received orders to leave Paris without delay. On the 21st, the thirty-eight survivors of the loyal party threw in their lot with the exiles and determined to hold up the machinery of Justice till their colleagues should return. They were at once expelled from the capital, the calmer spirits being sent to their country houses, the more excitable ones to little villages away in le Forez, Auvergne and Argonne.

The excellent Flammermont describes in pathetic language the martyrdom suffered by these worthy men who were fain to emulate the Conscript Fathers of Old Rome (provided always they had their backs to a good, warm fire, and their stomachs to a well-furnished table), and who shouted 'Tyranny!' because they were compelled to put up at an inn or to lodge with the curé. Following upon their many fierce and fiery speeches, their piteous recriminations have a comic flavour that is not a little entertaining. 'The cooking is bad,' 'the post boys are rude,' 'there was no hot-water-bottle in the conveyance,' 'the parsonage is uncomfortable,' 'the post-chaise is all over mud,' 'letters are delayed.' . . . and M. Flammermont concludes, as might have been expected, that in all this refinement of cruelty, the machinations of the Jesuits were surely discernible. But the truth is that Louis the Fifteenth is deserving of all admiration for having put up with them so long. What they got, they deserved a hundred times over, and the punishment inflicted upon them was, as Maupeou remarks, well calculated to 'bring back the magistrates to that calmer frame of mind', which became their dignity and their calling.

Nevertheless, the Chancellor had flattered himself that the resistance would not be so universal as it turned out to be, and that the Upper Chamber, made up as it was of men of riper years, of the

older presidents and councillors, would never go over to the malcontents. The unanimous defection of the magistrates left a third of the kingdom without any machinery of justice. On the 29th, therefore, the King summoned his Council of State. 'Gentlemen,' he said to them, 'I have need of your services in order that the course of justice in my Parlement shall be no longer interrupted. I am fully aware of your zeal and affection for my person and I place full reliance upon them. You also, in your turn, may rely on my protection, in carrying out the duties you are called upon to fulfil, and may be assured that, at all times I will extend to you the tokens of my affectionate recognition of your services.'

Daguesseau, the 'Father' of the Chamber, came forward and replied that the members of the council were all persuaded that their first duty was to set an example of obedience to the King's subjects, and to work with zeal and assiduity to carry out His Majesty's intentions. The advocates-general, the procurator-general and his deputies, received orders to serve on the interim tribunal. The chief registrar handed in his resignation, but the others, being threatened with arrest within twenty-four hours, gave in and returned to the Courts. But it was not enough to have judges. Litigants were also required. Now, the public were still persuaded that, in this further trial of strength, the Parlement would again prove victorious. No one wanted to compromise himself, or to incur the vengeance of the stronger party. Procurators and advocates were not forthcoming and the interim Parlement was unable to function as a civil court. The Judges came in for a few minutes of a morning and then, after formally adjourning the cases set down for trial on the cause list, once more withdrew. But besides that, even if things had gone on without a hitch, it would have been impossible for the Council of State, overburdened as it already was, to undertake so crushing a task. There was only one solution of the difficulty, and that was to proceed at once to a complete reorganization of the machinery of justice.

There was no time to be lost, for the aristocratic opposition, though momentarily baffled, were lifting up their heads again and preparing to attack. The Princes of the Blood were the first to raise their standard against Maupeou. The Duc D'Orléans and the Comte de Clermont forbade their Proctors to recognize the new tribunal; and, in giving similar orders to his people, the Comte d'Eu publicly declared that he would not care to be judged by such a parcel of scoundrels. The Princes met several times at the residence of the Duc d'Orléans and drew up remonstrances to the King, which



the King declined to read. The Provincial Courts likewise raised a great hubbub, sent in protest upon protest, spread disaffection among the advocates, and deluged the public with violent harangues plentifully garnished with lies. To complete the embattled host of the lawyers, one person only was now needed and that was the pompous Malesherbes. Deprived of the control of the book trade since the downfall of his father, Lamoignon, he was still president of the *Cour des Aides*, and it was in the name of that body that he caused to be secretly printed the famous remonstrances of the 24th February, one of the outstanding monuments of aristocratic ineptitude. 'Sire, the terror with which an attempt is being made to inspire all departments of State, has not shaken your *Cour des Aides*. The phantom of a general revolt of the magistracy has been held up before your eyes. In answer to this chimerical invention, we draw your attention to the abuses which. . . . ' Then came the usual stock-in-trade about 'inviolable rights', 'unhappy problems', 'heartless administration', 'voice of the people', 'illusory resources', and all that threadbare, shoddy rhetoric. In conclusion, Malesherbes made an appeal for the summoning of the States-General. 'Let the question be put, Sire, to the nation itself.' That was precisely what Louis the Sixteenth did a few years later, and, by way of answer, the third National Assembly cut off the head of this same Malesherbes, a fitting conclusion to a political career inspired by unconscious treachery, short-sightedness and morbid unrest.

From beginning to end, Maupeou displayed the most admirable coolness, energy, moderation and common sense. The Monarchy had three times as many magistrates as it required. Being infinitely specialized, the various courts were consumed with jealousy, fought with each other for the possession of advocates, and were perpetually encroaching on one another's preserves. The revolt of the Parlements afforded the Chancellor the means and opportunity of simplifying this out-of-date machinery, and of bringing the axe heavily down on a variety of abuses. In eight months the whole edifice had been completely demolished and built up anew.

The essential reforms were these: the new Feudalism was crushed; Judges were no longer the owners of their judgeships, but were chosen, appointed and remunerated by the Crown, who guaranteed their independence and declared them irremovable. Justice was thus no longer contaminated by filthy lucre, judges were forbidden to reap the smallest pecuniary advantage from the cases they tried, and advocates were prohibited from offering them presents or

gratuities of any kind. The Parlement of Paris and eleven Parlements and provincial Supreme Councils retained the privilege of registering laws, but the immense area over which the Paris Parlement had exercised jurisdiction was split up among five *Conseils Supérieurs* sitting at Blois, Chalons, Clermont Ferrand, Lyons and Poitiers. These bodies had no political powers, but they discharged all the judicial functions of the Parlements; they were in the strict sense of the term, Courts of Appeal. By being made more easily accessible to litigants, the administration of justice would be at once more satisfactory and more expeditious, while expenses for board and travel would be avoided. The *Conseil-Souverain* of Artois, the Parlements of Rouen and Douai were superseded by *Conseils Supérieurs*. The following bodies were done away with: The *Grand Conseil*, the *Cours des Aides* at Paris, Rouen and Clermont Ferrand, the *Conseil-Souverain* at Dombes, the *Cours des Monnaies*, the Paris *Bureau de Finances*, the Admiralties, the *Table de Marbre* and such Bailiwicks as were either recalcitrant or supernumerary. A *Conseil Supérieur* was set up at Nîmes in place of the Parlement of Toulouse; and another at Bayeux at the expense of Rouen. The Parlement of Metz was suppressed and its duties transferred to Nancy.

The Princes of the Blood and the leaders of the aristocratic cabal had been hoping that Maupeou would not succeed in getting together a sufficient number of magistrates to staff his *Conseils Supérieurs* and his new Parlements. But his task was rendered all the easier by the fact that the suppressed bodies had all been overcrowded; and because one good brain was quite enough to take the place of three second-rate ones. Moreover, the Parlements' adherents had never been really unanimous in their policy of rebellion. Many of the magistrates had associated themselves with the movement because they were afraid of their colleagues, and they disapproved of it in their hearts. Lastly, the abolition of the superfluous tribunals had set free a large number of judges, from whom the Chancellor was able to select the men he deemed best suited to his purpose.

The new Paris Parlement consisted of the *Grand Conseil* and a few members of the *Cour des Aides*. The King appointed to the post of first president one of the greatest administrators and most eminent jurists of the age, Bertier de Sauvigny, who had been Councillor of State for thirteen years and Intendant of Finance for Paris for sixteen. Bertier de Sauvigny had at first declined the appointment, pleading advancing years, infirmity and the number of responsi-

bilities which would be laid upon his shoulders just when he was in sore need of repose. On two occasions, despite the earnest representations of the Chancellor, he had persisted in his refusal. On April 3rd, however, he was ordered to Versailles and, about five o'clock, he was ushered into the presence of the King who had just returned from the chase.

'The King,' says Bertier in his diary, 'greeted me with every mark of affability.'

"Monsieur de Sauvigny," said he, "I have appointed you first president of my Paris Parlement, and you refuse me your services."

"Sire, I am always ready to obey Your Majesty in all the commands you may be pleased to lay upon me, but the Chancellor has doubtless informed you how potent are the objections which I have taken the liberty to place before him."

"Yes. He told me all about it. You think you are not strong enough. You are afraid of incurring the disapproval of the public. You are loath to make enemies."

"But, Sire, did the Chancellor mention to Your Majesty that I thought you might well recall the members of your Parlement without any risk of compromising your dignity?"

"You're wrong. If they came back, they would do the same thing all over again. I've been persuaded to give way many times before. They all thought I should do so again; but they made a mistake. They have provoked me beyond endurance."

He reminded the Chancellor of several instances saying:

"If I had not yielded on such or such an occasion, things would not be in the state they are in now."

"But, Sire," said I to the King, "I beg to point out to Your Majesty that you have already granted me favours, and honoured me with appointments which I might appropriately have begged you to confer on me as a reward for my services as a first president of many years standing, for you regarded those honours to which I refer as being of greater value and importance than the office to which you would now appoint me. Moreover, I have always had so much repugnance for the position of first president that if Your Majesty had wished to bestow it upon me fifteen years ago, with many more advantages than it can now boast of, I should have implored you to dispense me from accepting it."

"Yes, I know. You are a retiring man. But you are necessary to me in the post which I design for you. You will do me the pleasure to accept it, and I order you so to do."

## LOUIS THE FIFTEENTH

Bertier raised some further objections, but as the King made no reply and had assumed a very stern expression, he withdrew. Four days later, he received an autographed letter from Louis the Fifteenth. The writing was firm and regular, the letters well formed and properly joined together. An expert graphologist would have pronounced it the writing of a man of strong will, with his nerves under perfect control. 'Monsieur Bertier de Sauvigny, I am confident of your attachment and of your zeal. I have chosen you as first president of my Paris Parlement, despite your representations. I desire to be obeyed, and you must rely on my protection. And now, Monsieur Bertier de Sauvigny, I pray God that He will hold you in His sacred keeping.' The Parlement being thus reconstituted, the Archbishop of Paris celebrated the Red Mass with great pomp.

In the country, the new organization was put into operation more easily still. The Douai Parlement went over *en bloc* to the *Conseil Supérieur*; half the magistrates of Besançon accepted seats; at Toulouse Bordeaux, Rennes and Dijon there remained sufficient councillors and presidents to make up the required number; at Aix, the *Cour des Comptes* underwent its transformation into a Parlement with enthusiasm. At Pau, Colmar, Perpignan and Grenoble, the new Courts, which were merely the old ones under another name, entered upon their duties without delay. The *Conseil Supérieur* at Lyons was presided over by the Intendant, and composed of judges who had previously sat in the *Cour des Monnaies*. 'An experienced staff, belonging to the best classes of the population, for the most part wealthy, steady-going and well-educated, comprising one man of action and no very conspicuous mediocrities.' Such is the verdict passed upon it by M. Metzger who has made this council the subject of an important monograph. What he says is confirmed by M. Le Griel, who has written the history of the Council of Clermont Ferrand. A thousand magistrates had been relieved of their functions. To make it quite clear that there was to be no going back, Maupeou compelled his own son to apply for release from his duties as *président à mortier*, and obtained for him a post in the Army. On Saint Martin's day (November, 1771), the opening of the Courts was everywhere attended with great solemnity. The lower courts recognized the new Courts of Appeal and, slowly but surely, the advocates resumed their labours, only too relieved that they had not been struck off the register.

'As many as thirty or forty years ago,' said Maupeou to their president, 'the King saw perfectly well that you were always and

everywhere the principal cause of trouble in the various Parlements, and of the resistance offered to his will. Hardly six days ago, he was saying, apropos of your behaviour, that he would never forget how, in Cardinal Fleury's time, when the Jansenist troubles were at their height, a famous advocate called Le Normand had compelled him to give way. Ask anyone who was there whether I am deceiving you. Since the times to which he referred, he has seen the strikes of 1753 and 1757, and you know how you all behaved then. You may well imagine that all this was not calculated to make him change his mind about you; but what really put the finishing touch on the whole affair was that, at a meeting of the Chambers, M. de Saint Fargeau was incautious enough to say that they could suspend their duties with a perfectly easy mind, because it was quite certain that the advocates would stand by them to a man.'

Those writers who have concerned themselves with the history of Maupeou and his times, seem to have taken their evidence exclusively from Parliamentary documents and to have got the idea that France was heartbroken at the dispersal of the old magistrates. They have given touching accounts of litigants in tears, the crowd wringing their hands, and worthy citizens brought to the brink of despair. The real state of affairs was very different. The outgoing magistrates had ruled by intimidation. As long as they appeared powerful for harm, no one had dared to utter a word against them. When they fell, the pent up feelings of the populace at length exploded. They had made a lot of enemies by their selfishness and arrogance. There had been some notorious instances, the Barre affair, and the Sirven affair, for example, which proved that their so-called justice was too often one-sided, cruel and blind. Looking back again on the Calas business, there is still a good deal of mystery about it. Everything that transpired at the inquest, the disfigurement of the corpse, the unlikelihood of suicide, the lying and contradictory statements of the accused parties, would all lead one to conclude that Calas had killed his son, were it not that his heroism during the torture had carried conviction in his favour. The public, thoroughly persuaded that he was innocent, accused the Toulouse Parlement of basely sacrificing him to the fanatical fury of the Capitouls. Thus it came about that from the very start, Voltaire, who defended Calas, declared for Maupeou. He wrote, in his best style, five or six pamphlets in praise of the reform, in the course of which he called the ex-magistrates tiger-bulls, because, he said, they were as spiteful as they were stupid. Beaumarchais' set-to with Goetzman, the Councillor,

kept the public amused for a week or two, but Beaumarchais' case was so rotten, he could not get a barrister to defend him. However, Maupeou took care not to push his victory too far: he mitigated the exile of his adversaries, reinstated such as had only acted in good faith, upset the princes' cabal, and slowly but surely wore down the opposition of the aristocratic party. In order to keep up their spirits, the more stubborn kept telling themselves, and the world in general, that the ministers did not get on together, that the Chancellor was going to be dismissed and the old Parlement recalled. But the months went by and every day added to the solidity of the work accomplished. As is borne out by the documents handed over by Maupeou to Louis the Sixteenth, and now in the Bibliothèque Nationale, the measures of reform had been undertaken at the King's express desire, and he had kept pace with them, and directed them in all their details. All important documents – edicts, declarations, draft-speeches – had been annotated and approved by his own hand. A score of times he had declared, 'I am not going to change my mind.' Here, too, he stands as the precursor, the creator of things to come. Throughout his period of office, Maupeou was assisted by a young secretary, a sober-minded, industrious and loyal coadjutor, whose name was Charles François Lebrun. He was the future Consul, the friend and collaborator of Bonaparte, whose distinction it was, after the events of Brumaire, to revive the judicial system of Louis the Fifteenth, just as Gaudin had re-established his financial organization.

Now that it had shaken itself free of the trammels of the feudal opposition, the Monarchy was recovering its freedom of action. For years now, a veritable incubus had been weighing upon France, an obscure sense of foreboding, which Maupeou's bold and energetic measure had at length dispelled. To get to work, to do something, is in itself a fortifying and healthy tonic. It invigorates, banishes uncertainty, restores confidence, and resuscitates the will. While Maupeou was taking steps to bring together in a single code the whole legal system of the country, d'Aiguillon, in his post at the Foreign Office, was reaping the harvest of Choiseul's errors in the East. Without being able to stir a finger, he was compelled to look on as an unwilling spectator while the first partition of Poland was carried through its final stages. But he reaped his revenge in Sweden. People had already come to look on Sweden as a second Poland. 'I await, in fear and trembling,' wrote Gustavus the Third, himself, 'the coming of the time when the neighbouring powers will take it

into their heads to subject us to their yoke.' Louis the Fifteenth and d'Aiguillon advised him to reassert his authority by a *coup d'état*, and managed to put him in possession of two millions to enable him to raise troops. The plan turned out a success and a new constitution was put into operation. The Tsarina and Frederick sent threatening letters, but Louis the Fifteenth gave them to understand that he would support Sweden with an army and a fleet, and they bowed to the force of circumstances. In America, also, events were taking a turn which was likely to prove favourable to France. The thirteen colonies, having fallen out with the Mother Country over a question of duties, were threatening to revolt. Boston had already given the signal and the British Government was about to give orders for the harbour to be blockaded. With feverish haste, Bourgeois de Boynes pushed on with his shipbuilding programme. He established an effective control over expenditure, encouraged the promotion of Commonsers, set himself to combat party spirit, and, by the measures of unification which he introduced in 1772, put an end to the class rivalry between the officers of aristocratic and plebeian origin. He further gave strict orders that sailors, when on shore, were to be subject to the strictest discipline.

The Abbé Terray, the Controller-General, was an ex-official of the Paris Parlement. In 1756 he had been the only member who did not fling his resignation in the King's face. In his capacity as *rapporteur* of fiscal decisions, he had been a member of the Finance Commission, set up by Laverdy to draw up a scheme of taxation-reform. This Commission, the papers of which are distributed among several files in the archives, had performed a very considerable task. The four volumes published by Moreau de Beaumont regarding *les impositions et droits en Europe*, represent only a portion of the information which it succeeded in collecting. Like Maupeou, Terray came down to his office about six o'clock in the morning. By ten, everything was done, and he was free to receive all comers. In his admirable history of Finance, M. Marion portrays him as a man of 'a clear and decisive cast of mind, remarkably sound in his judgments, not in the least pettifogging, taking a broad view of things, yet establishing order and economy in everything he handles; a man of energetic and independent character. . . . He was by no means the man to let himself be led, or browbeaten by others, and that alone was a characteristic that admirably fitted him to grapple with the situation.' Keeping down expenditure, augmenting receipts, such were the two points of the programme on which he proceeded

to concentrate with an unblushing cynicism that won him an unpopularity which was as exceptional in its virulence, as it was imperturbably and cheerfully endured.

The tampering with the taxes by the Courts of Justice had dried up the national income and, by the end of 1769, next year's revenue had been almost completely eaten up in advance. So long as the Parlements hung on, Terray had to make the best of existing means; suspension of debt-redemption, postponement of drawings for lotteries, compulsory conversions, cuts in pensions and salaries, appropriation of profits from taxation, consolidation of the floating debt and advances allowed by the banks. These measures, for which the Abbé is blamed, did not excite the smallest opposition on the part of the Courts. On condition that their own immunities were respected, they were indifferent as to what might happen elsewhere. But when the Parlements bit the dust, it was found possible to gather up the threads of Machault's great enterprise; and Terray immediately addressed himself to the task. He overhauled and simplified the machinery of indirect taxation, abolished a number of unfair exemptions, revoked agreements where the interest receivable by the State was unreasonably low and, lastly, in terms of the decree of November, 1771, revived the *vingtièmes*, enacting that those first imposed should continue in perpetuity, and the second until 1781. He further decided that they should be levied strictly on income, without respect of persons. He urged on the compilation of the register, instituted a system of verification, prosecuted defrauders, and compelled the privileged classes to pay their share. But it was all done without violence and without injustice. 'Take care,' he wrote to an intendant, 'to see that no excessive measures are put into operation, and when you have to come to a decision as between tax-surveyor and taxpayer, give the latter the benefit of any doubt there may be, provided, of course, you have made every effort to get at the truth.' If the *vingtième* was duly paid up, the deficit was vanquished, debt redemption made possible; it paved the way first for the mitigation and finally for the abolition of the more vexatious impositions, it was the end of 'privilege' and the signal for a revival of public confidence. It was also, as M. Marion justly remarks, a salutary check on the appetites of that gilded clique who had long been in the habit of living in the lap of luxury at the expense of the public purse. People never complain that grants or taxes are too high when they are receiving the former, and evading the latter. If what they had to pay out had been strictly proportioned to what



they thought their due, it is probable that the pensioners would have moderated their demands. Terray had it in him to carry through that reform. To him, at all events, is due the honour of overcoming difficulties till then considered insuperable, and of saving a situation which everyone believed to be desperate. Moreover, to complete the rehabilitation of the country's finances, he would have found an ally in the increase in the country's wealth. Under Louis the Sixteenth, even when Necker had had his fling of folly, the tax surplus sufficed to postpone the crisis for five more years. In a prosperous country, where the taxable limit is still a long way off, there is no fear of a financial crisis.

For twenty years France's only trouble had been a political one. Disintegration of the State, recrudescence of feudalism, decline of the royal power, revolt of the magistracy, call it what you will, you cannot rob Louis the Fifteenth of the merit of having understood the danger and the still greater merit of overcoming it.

On April 27th, 1774, Louis the Fifteenth was at Trianon with Madame du Barry and a few members of his Court, when he was seized with headache, attacks of giddiness, shivering fits and pains in the lumbar region. Notwithstanding that, he refused to make the smallest change in the order of the day and went out hunting. When he got back, he was decidedly feverish, and all that night his temperature continued to rise. La Marinière, the surgeon, not liking the look of things, gave orders for the King to be taken back to the Château.

'If he is going to be ill, he had better be ill at Versailles.'

Carriages were sent for in great haste. Wrapped in a dressing-gown and cloak, the King flung himself into a coach. The driver whipped up his horses and in three minutes the King had arrived. He just saw his daughters for a moment as he went in, and immediately went up to his room. For several days he remained in bed. He complained of headache and said he had pains all over him. His face was congested, his pulse rapid, and his temperature still high. The doctors consulted together and could not agree, but so as to do something, they prescribed three bleedings, which left the patient much weaker.

The King kept on insisting on their telling him the truth.

'You say I am not really ill, and that I shall soon be all right again, but you don't mean a word of it, and you ought to tell me the truth.'

## LOUIS THE FIFTEENTH

One night, as the King was taking a draught, a doctor thought he noticed some red patches.

'Bring the light closer,' he said, 'the King cannot see his glass.'

Everyone bent over with one accord, and got up again without a word. It was smallpox, confluent and malignant smallpox. The patches were very abundant on the face; but not so numerous on the body. The medical men took counsel and decided not to let the King know, for the time being at any rate. But within an hour the bulletins were carrying the tidings to the four quarters of the kingdom.

The 30th April went by without any appreciable aggravation of the symptoms. The Princesses had hastened to their father's bedside and took it in turns to remain in the sick-room. The King was fairly peaceful and spoke little, but very sensibly and with all his wits about him.

'If I hadn't had the smallpox,' he said, 'I should fancy I had got it now.'

They hastened to set his mind at rest, and he let the subject drop. On May 3rd, he was delirious for some minutes, then his mind cleared again. In an off-hand sort of way, as if it was a matter of no importance, he asked for a looking-glass. He looked long and carefully at the blotches that disfigured him, gave a few orders in a low tone, and then fell to talking about nothing in particular.

Next day the Court learned that he had summoned the Senior Chaplain and that he had said to him:

'I've got the smallpox. People don't get over it at my age. I must put my affairs in order.'

Then he turned to Madame du Barry.

'We must not have the Metz scandal all over again. I must do my duty to God and my people. It is necessary that you should go away.'

At four o'clock, Madame du Barry entered a coach with her sisters-in-law and the Duchesse d'Aiguillon, to whose house it had been arranged she should retire. The King, who was unaware of the hour of her departure, thought he still had time to say good-bye, and, about six, he asked for her.

'Sire, she has gone,' replied the attendant.

'Where has she gone to?'

'To Rueil, Sire.'

'What, already!'

He fell silent. Of what was he thinking? Of Metz, no doubt, and all the scandals of his private life. And of France also, France which

he was leaving rich and strong, and on the eve of wiping out the disgrace of the Treaty of Paris. He knew that these last years had cost him the love of his people, and yet, when the hour for settling the account should sound, they would be able to look back upon his reign with pride. Everything of note that had been wrought, for half a century now, had originated with him. The dismissal of the Duc de Bourbon, the long years when Fleury was in office, the union of Lorraine with France, the *vingtième*, the reversal of the alliances, the acquisition of Corsica, the abolition of the Parlements – these things he had willed, one and all. The revolution which some spoke of as approaching, he had set his hand thereto, without bloodshed, without violence, wherever reform was reasonable and necessary. Would the Dauphin have it in him to persevere in the road which he had pointed out. He had laid the foundations of a new France. He had been kindly, just, peace-loving, and tolerant, sparing of his peoples' blood. Ah, if he could but live another five years, the Monarchy would be saved. Just five years more . . . Five years . . . But no; it was all over. It only remained for him to make his peace with God. 'A priest! A priest! Three times I have asked for a confessor. Is the Abbé Maudoux not here?'

It was three o'clock in the morning. The Abbé Maudoux entered, and the King spoke with him for a quarter of an hour. Towards evening the Sacraments were administered with great pomp. The communion-cloth was held by the Duc d'Orléans, the Prince de Condé, the Bishop of Senlis and a chaplain. With a great effort the King took the Host that was held out to him, then, holding Madame Louise by the hand, he asked for Cardinal de la Roche Aymon and spoke a few words to him in an undertone.

'Messieurs,' said the Cardinal in a clear voice, 'the King commands me to tell you, since he cannot do so himself, that he repents of his sins and that, if he has given scandal to his people, he is heartily sorry for it, that he is firmly resolved to go back to the ways of his youth and to use what is left to him of life, to defend the cause of religion.'

Then in husky, hardly audible tones, the King added:

'I should like to have been strong enough to tell you that myself.'

Then he turned to Madame Adelaide:

'I never felt better,' said he, 'or more at peace.'

For two days longer he endured the most horrible sufferings, without a single complaint, praying incessantly. His face was swollen and seemed to have turned almost black. The blotches had

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ceased to suppurate, and from his body, which was covered all over with a sort of crust, there arose a fetid odour. The doors and windows had to be kept constantly open. On May 10th, at noon, he entered upon his death agony. On the ledge of the balcony stood a lighted candle, put there for a signal. At half-past-three, an attendant approached and extinguished it.

The King was dead.